

**UNDERSTANDING THE NEOLIBERALIZATION OF
EDUCATION THROUGH SPACES OF
LABOUR AUTONOMY**

PAUL BOCKING

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**GRADUATE PROGRAM IN GEOGRAPHY
YORK UNIVERSITY
TORONTO, ONTARIO**

SEPTEMBER 2017

© PAUL BOCKING, 2017

Abstract

In recent years K-12 school systems from New York to Mexico City to Toronto, serving vastly divergent students and communities, have been subject to strikingly similar waves of neoliberal policies by governments. A key manifestation has been the de-professionalization or deskilling of teachers. Organized labour's response has been highly uneven geographically.

Professional autonomy means a capacity and freedom of teachers to exercise their judgement in interpreting broad curriculum guidelines, into their day to day classroom activities. It is the primary obstacle to the further neoliberalization of education. The expansion of standardized instructional and evaluative techniques and technologies are necessary for opening new markets within schools and for weakening the collective power of teachers and their unions. Their proponents are limited by the existence of the classroom as a space of labour autonomy, run by experienced and highly educated teachers. Recognizing the significant crossover of policy at the North American scale alongside significant economic and political linkages, this dissertation centres on case studies in three cities, New York, Mexico City and Toronto.

This dissertation assesses challenges to teachers' professional autonomy from 2001 to 2016 across five dimensions of comparison. First are changes in governance, namely the centralization of authority, often legitimized by mobilizing policies from elsewhere. Second are policies which have shifted workplace power relations between principals and teachers, as with 'School Based Management' programs that download budgetary, discipline and dismissal practices to school administrators. Third are the effect of standardized testing of students and teachers on the latter's capacity to exercise professional judgement in the classroom through designing unique lesson plans, pedagogy and evaluation. Fourth is the creation of 'school choice' for schools competing for enrolment and thereby funding, which has tended to perpetuate class and racial segregation. Finally, the ability of teachers' unions to construct a multi scalar strategy is considered, including alliances with parents, communities and other sectors of labour. This dissertation concludes with recommendations for how teachers' unions could respond to the challenge to professional autonomy with a stronger engagement on teacher practice and professional self-regulation.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation has its origins in 2012, when inspired to continue graduate studies by my newly completed Masters, and with no permanent high school teaching positions available in Toronto, I entered York University's geography PhD program. My decision was in large part due to my supervisor, Steven Tufts, whose research on unions and workers would enable me to continue with labour studies. My peers convinced me that the interdisciplinary nature of human geography would enrich how I approached my existing interests.

My focus on labour and political economy in North America emerged from three sources. I had spent years developing contacts and friendships with activists, teachers, academics and union leaders in Mexico, which I wanted to sustain and broaden. I also believed that many contemporary policies had their origins at the centre of the 'empire', and so it was useful to study contexts in the US. Finally, I wanted to make my research relevant and directly applicable to the political context in which I was situated in Canada. A desire to draw on my experiences as a teacher and a union activist, fed my interest in teachers' work. This also led to an interest in qualitative research, including semi-structured interviews with teachers and gaining understanding through observation, sometimes of a participatory nature, of how schools and classrooms function.

When I began writing my dissertation in 2012, in the context of a US labour movement broadly in retreat and teachers' unions on the defensive, the Chicago Teachers' Union was receiving considerable attention for confronting the agenda of an aggressive neoliberal mayor, and by building meaningful alliances with parents and broad member participation in order to wage a successful strike. Attention on teacher activism in Mexico has focused on the radical

teachers of the south, particularly since the ‘Oaxaca Commune’ of 2006. In Canada, British Columbian teachers were prominent for their long battle against a right wing provincial government, including a successful, publicly supported illegal strike in 2005. I was interested in the less attention-grabbing cases, where unions weren’t known for their militancy or radicalism. I thought this could provide lessons for understanding the broader state of North American teacher unionism and the neoliberalization of education.

My research benefited enormously from some very fine teachers. They brought me into their schools, introduced me to their colleagues and sometimes had me teach ad-hoc lessons to their students on politics and culture in Canada. Among the dozens of teachers whom I had the privilege of interviewing, thank you to Soccoro Ramses Lopes and Magda Carrera (who brought me on a memorable trip to Puebla’s Primero de Mayo parade) in Mexico City, and Megan Moskop and Mindy Rosier in New York. Your passion and love for teaching are an inspiration for me. Thanks to the colleagues whom I have worked beside in the Toronto District School Board, who helped me grow as a teacher, and gave me insights into Ontario’s education policy, especially Jennifer Mousseau and Sharry Taylor.

As I shaped my dissertation, Steven Tufts’ very focused, practical advice was tremendously helpful. He kept me on a writing schedule, took my descriptive empirical research to a higher analytical level, and introduced me to relevant theoretical debates. I also benefited greatly from the insights and guidance of my committee members, Ranu Basu and Viviana Patroni. Thank you also to my external reviewers at York University, Sarah Barrett and Philip Kelly, and from McMaster University, Wayne Lewchuk. I was inspired by the research on teacher unionism of Peter Brogan, fellow York geography PhD graduate, who was of great

assistance in providing contacts in New York. Thanks to my geography office mate Kenneth Cardenas for sharing the PhD student life. I am grateful to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) for the Joseph Armand Bombardier Doctoral Scholarship which allowed me to focus on my dissertation during the final years of my PhD. Thank you also to graduate program secretary Yvonne Yim.

Lois Weiner at New Jersey City University gave me invaluable insights on education reform in the US, as did members of the Movement of Rank and File Educators (MORE) within New York's United Federation of Teachers. The Secretary of Public Education (SEP) of Mexico City, and the activists of the National Coordination of Education Workers (Coordinadora Nacional de los Trabajadores de la Educación) of Mexico City, were very generous with their time. Thank you to the leadership and activist members of OSSTF Toronto and OSSTF Provincial Office, especially Domenic Bellissimo, who introduced me in 2010 to the Trinational Coalition in Defense of Public Education. My fellow executive members of the Occasional Teachers' Bargaining Unit since 2010, especially Linda Bartram, Vincent Zambrano and Ann Burke, brought me into the union and always supported my studies.

My research in Mexico is indebted to Maria de la Luz Arriaga Lemus at the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de México (UNAM), who introduced me to countless education activists, Thursday pozole lunches, and brought me up to date on each of my visits. Nicholas Wright, former director of the Casa de los Amigos, one of my favourite places in the world, assisted with transcriptions and took me on journeys to explore Mexico City. My friend Hortensia Escobar, a tireless organizer and luchadora social, also assisted with transcriptions, and introduced me to many movements in Mexico, including the teachers and normalistas of Ayotzinapa in Guerrero.

Thank you to my family, my sister Emma Bocking, my father Stephen Bocking, the model of a prolific and humble academic, Barbara Znamirowski, and my mother Rita Furgiuele, who first encouraged me to go into teaching, and is my role model as an educator. Finally my fellow comrade PhD student, wife, and friend, benim canim Pelin Asci, who kept me balanced and grounded as a person through this whole process. Seni seviyorum.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
List of Tables	x
List of Figures	xi
Acronyms	xii
1. Introduction	1
1.1: Key Ideas, Focuses & Limitations	1
1.2: Dissertation Overview	10
2. Theoretical Areas and Conceptual Framework	17
2.1: Introduction	17
2.2: Neoliberalism	17
2.3: Policy Mobilities	22
2.4: Labour Geography	27
2.5: Neoliberal Education Policy	32
2.6: Teachers' Professional Autonomy	42
2.7: Teachers' Unions & Labour	52
2.8: Towards a Labour Geography of Teacher Autonomy	56
3. Methodology	63
3.1: Situating the Researcher	64
3.2: Participatory Ethnography: A Focus on Listening to and Talking with Teachers	67
3.3: Challenges of 'Rigorous but not Disinterested' Scholarship	75
3.4: Using and Choosing Case Studies	77
3.5: Policy Analysis	80
3.6: An Epistemology for Studying Teachers' Autonomy	82
4. North American Geographies of Neoliberal Education Policy	88
Introduction	88
4.1: Professional Autonomy and the History of Teacher Unionism: Three Contexts	89
4.2: New York, Mexico City and Toronto as Centres of Education Policy Formation	110
4.3: Rolling Out Neoliberal Education Policy: Key Authors and their Texts	124

4.4: Teachers' Diplomacy, Policy Mobility and Transnational Solidarity	134
Chapter 5: New York City	145
5.1: Preface- Visiting a Small High School on the Upper West Side	145
5.2: Introduction	150
5.3: Structural Changes I: Centralizing Power to Facilitate Neoliberal Fast Policy	152
- Mayoral Control	152
5.4: Structural Changes II: Balkanizing the Workplace, Transforming Workplace Culture-164	
Small Schools & the New Century Schools Initiative	164
5.5: Policies that Increase Teacher Turnover and Precariousness, Weakening the School Site Union & Teachers' Professional Autonomy	174
5.6: Scaling up: Initiative in Neoliberal Policy Shifts from NYC to Albany	189
5.7: Cuomo's Expansion of Standardized Testing into Teacher Evaluation: Undermining Professional Autonomy	197
5.8: State of Our Union, State of Our Schools	210
Chapter 6: Mexico City	225
6.1: Introduction	225
6.2: Transitions in State Power, Decentralization & Emergence of Elba Esther Gordillo's SNTE as a Key Neoliberal Actor	227
6.3: Re-centralized Governance through Competition I: Programa de Escuelas de Calidad (Quality Schools Program -PEC), the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (INEE) & ENLACE	236
6.4: Re-centralized Governance through Competition II: Alianza por la Calidad Educativa (Alliance for Quality Education -ACE)	251
6.5: Enrique Peña Nieto and Fast Policy	261
6.6: What Makes a Teacher? Marginalization of the Normales and Teacher Education	267
6.7: Testing Teachers: Ley de Servicio Profesional Docente (Professional Teaching Service Law)	272
6.8: Precarious Employment & Professional Autonomy	280
6.9: Acquiescence, Resistance and the Challenges of Scaling Up: the CNTE in the City and the Countryside	290
Chapter 7: Toronto	304
7.1: Introduction	304

7.2: Centralizing Governance: Increasing Ontario Ministry of Education Control of the TDSB	306
7.3: Quantifying Student Achievement: Policy from the Centre	313
7.4: Quantifying Student Achievement: Impact on the Classroom & Professional Autonomy	333
7.5: Quantifying Student Achievement: Intersection of Race, Class & School Choice on Teachers' Work	347
7.6: Scaling up: The Centralization of Bargaining & the Negotiation of Professional Autonomy	358
8. Conclusion	377
Centrality of teachers' professional autonomy in the struggle against the neoliberalization of education	379
Comparing policy trends on professional autonomy and the scaling up of education governance	386
A multiscalar geography of teachers' professional autonomy	388
Directions for future research	393
Final words	396
Bibliography	397
Appendix A: List of Interviews and Dates	421
Appendix B: Teacher Interview Protocol	423

List of Tables

Table 1: Secondary Classroom Teaching as Proportion of Recognized Work	287
--	-----

List of Figures

Figure 1: US Public School Teacher Unionization Rate by Region	55
Figure 2. Scales of Teachers' Labour Autonomy	59
Figure 3. Median Years Teaching Experience of New York Classroom Teachers	177
Figure 4. New York City Teacher Age Distribution 2013-14	178
Figure 5. Nassau and Suffolk Counties Teacher Age Distribution 2013-14	178
Figure 6. Median Teacher Salary in Selected New York State Counties 2013-14	179

Acronyms

ACE	Alianza Por la Calidad Educativa (Alliance for Quality Education)
AFT	American Federation of Teachers
AFSEDF	Administración Federal de Servicios Educativos en el DF (Federal Administration of Education Services in the Federal District)
ANMEB	Acuerdo Nacional para la Modernización de la Educación Básica (National Accord for the Modernization of Basic Education)
APPR	Annual Professional Performance Review
ATR	Absent Teacher Reserve
BCTF	British Columbia Teachers Federation
BOE	Board of Education
CEA	Confederación de Educadores Americanos (Confederation of American Educators)
CNTE	Coordinadora Nacional de los Trabajadores de la Educación (National Coordination of Education Workers)
CORE	Caucus of Rank and File Educators
CSD	Community School District
CTF	Canadian Teachers Federation
DF	Distrito Federal (Federal District)
EQAO	Education Quality and Accountability Office
ETFO	Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
INEE	Instituto Nacional por la Evaluación Educativa (National Institute for the Evaluation of Education)
ISSSTE	Instituto de Seguro Social de Trabajadores al Servicio del Estado (Public Sector Social Security Institute)
MORE	Movement of Rank and File Educators
MORENA	Movimiento Regeneración Nacional (National Regeneration Movement)
MOSL	Measures of Student Learning
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
NEA	National Education Association
NDP	New Democratic Party
NTIP	New Teacher Induction Program
NYC DOE	New York City Department of Education
NYSED	New York State Education Department
NYSUT	New York State United Teachers
OCT	Ontario College of Teachers
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

OECTA	Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association
PAN	Partido de la Acción Nacional (National Action Party)
PDT	Provincial Discussion Table
PEC	Programa de Escuelas de Calidad (Quality Schools Program)
PEP	Panel for Education Policy
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
PRD	Partido de la Revolución Democrática (Party of the Democratic Revolution)
PRI	Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party)
OISE	Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
OPSBA	Ontario Public School Boards Association
OSSTF	Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation
RTTT	Race To The Top
SBM	School Based Management
SEP	Secretaría de la Educación Pública (Secretary of Public Education)
SNTE	Sindicato Nacional de los Trabajadores de la Educación (National Union of Education Workers)
TDSB	Toronto District School Board
TFA	Teach For America
TPA	Teacher Performance Appraisal
UCORE	United Caucus of Rank and File Educators
UFT	United Federation of Teachers
UNAM	Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (National Autonomous University of Mexico)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UPN	Universidad Nacional Pedagógica (National Pedagogical University)
US DOE	United States Department of Education

1. Introduction

1.1: Key Ideas, Focuses & Limitations

What it means to be a teacher or a student within public education is undergoing a transformation. In recent years K-12 school systems from New York to Mexico City and increasingly in Toronto, each serving vastly divergent students and communities, have been subject to strikingly similar waves of policy proposals. Many of these initiatives can be characterized within an overarching neoliberal rationality (Klees 2008; Hernandez 2013; Aboites 2012; Weiner 2012). A key manifestation has been the de-professionalization or deskilling of teachers.

Although highly uneven in terms of the resources dedicated by the state both within and between Mexico and its northern neighbours, mass public elementary and secondary education emerged through much of the twentieth century to a large extent defined by humanist ideals of relative equality and the intrinsic worth of education, at least in theory (Manzer 2003; Levinson 2001; Pinto 2015). Alongside it evolved a labour relations structure through which teachers won a substantial degree of security, stability and professional autonomy through waves of strikes and organizing in Canada and the US (Weiner 2008). In Mexico, corporatist integration of the teachers' union resulted in greater instability for teachers depending on political circumstances. Grassroots mobilization was overwhelmingly suppressed until the emergence of the democratic teachers' movement in 1979, subsequently consolidated in Mexico's central and southern states (Cook 1996; Foweraker 1993).

The contemporary neoliberal shift in education confronts the universal public service model by striving to both privatize this system by realigning its form and content from

‘education as its own end’ to for-profit rationalities, and reducing expenditures on educators -by far the largest component of public education budgets. Examples well-established across North America include a shift of classroom time and emphasis to standardized testing to assess both students and their teachers, their usage to define ‘school choice’ and the related rise of privately managed, publicly funded charter schools opened in tandem with the closure of traditional public schools. Powerful coalitions have emerged in Canada, the US and Mexico to push forward this agenda. Across each country, their membership consistently includes businesses with a large stake in education markets, pro-privatization think tanks, their outspoken ideological allies in government, and transnational organizations like the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Lipman 2011; Weiner 2012; Hernandez 2013).

To pursue their objectives these groups have consistently sought to weaken the power of resistant teachers’ unions. Organized labour’s response has been highly uneven geographically. For the past thirty years, militant responses by Mexican teachers to similar policies has been largely limited to state locals in the south led by the democratic teachers’ movement, though the fall of 2013 and summer of 2016 yielded dramatic waves of nationwide strikes and protests. Meanwhile in the US despite notable exceptions like the seven day strike by the Chicago Teachers Union in September 2012, the response of union leadership has largely been to reluctantly acquiesce (Brogan 2014). In Canada the record is more mixed. Provincial/state, and/or national unions may play significant roles in articulating union policy and negotiations. However it is at the local level where teacher unions primarily interact with the school districts where policy is actually implemented, and where their members, their students and their parents work, study and live. Recognizing the significant crossover of policy at the North American scale

alongside significant economic and political linkages, my research will centre on case studies of these issues in three North American cities, New York, Mexico City and Toronto.

My research seeks to address two major sets of questions. First, how do governmental policymakers and key privatization advocates (eg. think tanks, business associations and academics) develop neoliberal K-12 education policy and how does it move across jurisdictions in North America? A second set of questions addresses the agency of teachers' unions within this context, a focus I will be approaching guided by theorists in labour geography and considering the role in a broader social context, geographies of education. What are the characteristics that define the uneven responses of local teachers' unions in Canada, the US and Mexico to the roll-out of neoliberal education policies, including but not limited to, the union's history and political cultures within the city and at the school level? As will be made evident in each of my case studies, teachers' unions are also far from politically homogeneous spaces. They are the site of sometimes bitter conflicts over internal priorities, and associated debates on how to relate to the state, the communities which their members serve, and the role of the teacher itself.

This dissertation explores how mobile contemporary education policies intersect with the agency of teachers' unions in negotiating the professional autonomy of teachers. Professional autonomy means the capacity and freedom of teachers to exercise their judgement in interpreting broad curriculum guidelines established by the state into their day to day classroom activities. Teachers exercise their autonomy by making pedagogical decisions (methodologies of instruction and evaluation), determining the relative emphasis to place on these general objectives, choosing many of the resources used, and in their efforts to build rapport with students and effectively run the class. The capacity for judgement teachers exercise in these areas

derives principally from professional training and years of experience and peer support. The objective of exercising professional autonomy or judgement, is to best meet the specific needs of each unique class of students. Teachers' professional knowledge could perhaps be organized into three areas: subject area knowledge, pedagogy and arguably, a less tangible emotional intelligence for supporting child and adolescent development. While important in all schools, the latter is especially critical in contexts where students experience severe deprivation of social supports, often for reasons associated with high levels of poverty. These parameters place the professional autonomy of teachers within broad boundaries, more limited than the traditional academic freedom of tenured university faculty. Professional autonomy is essential for teachers to be able to interpret policies and curriculum originating from distant authorities in a way that is meaningful for their students. There are also justifiable limits to this autonomy, an issue that will be further discussed in Chapter 2.

I argue in this dissertation, that *teachers' professional autonomy is under threat across North America, due to a range of contemporary neoliberal policies which have the outcome of disempowering and deprofessionalizing educators. It is a, if not the, primary site of contestation in education systems.* The forms of these policies which attack professional autonomy, and the degree to which they have been implemented vary considerably across and within Canada, the US and Mexico. I attempt to explain the extent to which this is the case by examining the mobility of these policies and their intersection with the agency of teachers' unions and movements. Moreover, I argue that *professional autonomy, the power this conveys to teachers over their work, is the primary obstacle to the further neoliberalization of education.* The further expansion of standardized instructional and evaluative techniques and technologies, and semi-

skilled instructors or technicians to operate them, are two of the key objectives of both opening new markets within schools and politically, for weakening the collective power of teachers and their unions. Both are important for increasing the viability of schools as a source of profitability. They are limited by the continued existence of the classroom as a space of labour autonomy, run by experienced and highly educated teachers.

I assess challenges to teachers' professional autonomy in my case studies across five dimensions of comparison on governmental policy and teacher responses. First I will be looking at changes in governance, namely the centralization of authority to higher levels, often legitimized by mobilizing policies from elsewhere. A weakening of local democratic control often ensues. Second, I will consider how contemporary policies have shifted workplace power relations between principals and teachers, as with 'School Based Management' programs that download budgetary, hiring, discipline and dismissal practices to school administrators. Thirdly, I look at the effect of standardized testing of students and teachers on the latter's capacity to exercise professional judgement in the classroom through designing appropriate and unique lesson plans, pedagogy and forms of evaluation. Fourth, and particularly relevant in New York and Toronto, I assess 'school choice' or the creation of competitive markets for schools seeking to increase enrolment and thereby secure more funding. Finally, in each case study site I consider the strategies employed by teacher unions towards accommodation and resistance, the importance of a strong school-site presence, the ability to 'scale-up' strategy to challenge higher levels of government, and the capacity or failure to construct sufficiently broad alliances with parents, community allies and other sectors of labour.

My three case studies, New York, Mexico City and Toronto, share the characteristics of ‘global cities’. They comprise the dominant metropolitan area of their nation and a high profile site for policy development and implementation, due to a critical degree of international interconnectedness through the presence of major universities, think tanks, media and policy makers (Sassen 2012). Each is also the home of established teachers’ unions with complex histories of dissent, collaboration and acquiescence by educators to waves of education reforms. A tremendous diversity and unevenness of political culture, economics and history exists between and within the countries in which these cities are situated (especially between Mexico and its northern neighbours). However, I believe that a North American study is a useful lens for understanding contemporary education policy and teachers’ work for what it can tell us generally about policy mobility generally within such a diverse region, and because actors are increasingly conscious and influenced by, developments occurring elsewhere on this continent. Of course, these reforms also exist and derive their logic (as do sometimes resistant teachers) from definitions of ‘common sense’ in education that are increasingly global in scale (Verger et al 2013; Weiner 2008).

This dissertation focuses then on analyzing a specific set of policies affecting teachers’ professional autonomy, which are necessary for us to understand how their work is being transformed. It does not pretend to encompass the breadth of what the neoliberalization of K-12 education signifies, in the form of Ravitch (2013) or Weiner (2008). For example, there is less discussion here of charter schools, which are very important in shaping the contemporary context of education in the US, or the effect that a prevalence of charter schools where teachers are significantly deprofessionalized (especially in New York) has on public schools. The study does

not significantly explore issues and debates around the role of classroom technology on teachers' work or the existence of commercial contracts in schools.

Here, I focus on the changes in classroom governance which have an effect on the roll out of education reforms, especially if professional autonomy is diminished. These developments are usually part of a scalar strategy by governments to optimize their capacity to implement policies, frequently in these cases, with the objective of overcoming a critical weight of organized teachers at a particular scale. Teachers respond with their own strategies which with varying effectiveness, try to make scale work for them too. Across all three cases in this dissertation, the tendency is towards a scaling up of governance, usually from the municipal scale -the basic institutional level of union organization, to the state/provincial or even national level. In all cases, the primary state actors leading these initiatives are a relatively small group around the executive, with the elected legislature playing a less significant role. The centralization of labour relations for teachers in North America provides an interesting contrast with contemporary trends in decentralization for significant sectors of unionized workers in the private sector (Sweeney, McWilliams & Hickey 2012: 247). Nevertheless, while assessing these scalar shifts, as this dissertation argues that the agency of teachers is vital for understanding the success or failure of how these policies impact their work, the case studies are primarily at the local scale. This is the level at which ordinary teachers live and work, and where I employ field observation at schools and interviews with classroom teachers.

The shared spatial characteristics of these three urban case studies naturally imposes limitations on the applicability of this study in other contexts. The experiences of teachers working in rural schools or within mid-size 'ordinary cities' (Robinson 2006) are not represented

here. It is also important to recognize the diversity of teachers' experience at the subnational level through regional variations. In Canada, this is evident through the provincial administration of K-12 education. Although the characteristics of the systems share strong similarities in terms of policies and governance, the dynamics of distinct provincial governments leads to a divergence between the experiences of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, which engaged in major strikes in the mid-2000s, and the Ontario teachers who practiced a relative labour peace during this period. Similarly, the experience of teachers' work varies dramatically across the US. Despite the many challenges described in Chapter 5, New York City remains a relative bastion of professional stability in comparison with the context of education in Florida, Arizona, North Carolina and elsewhere in the mostly poorer and socially conservative 'Right to Work' South. In Mexico, the principal divisions are between the predominantly rural and Indigenous south, and the urban, more affluent Mestizo centre and north, and within these regions, between cities and the countryside. The former is the bastion of the democratic teachers' movement; teachers' union locals in the latter are mostly presided over by the official national union. Many studies of Mexican teachers have focused on high profile struggles in Chiapas, Guerrero or Oaxaca. Part of the purpose of this study is to understand the conditions that have led to a less militant response in Mexico City, as well as in New York and Toronto, while colleagues elsewhere have more assertively contested similar policies.

It is also important to establish the historical parameters of this dissertation. Chapter 4 will provide a brief historical overview of the rise of North American teacher unionism in the 20th Century with a focus on Toronto, New York and Mexico City. I believe strongly in the value of historic context for social research and I am conscious of the danger of portraying the current

window of education politics as somehow unique or without precedent. For instance, a brief read of Mary Kay Vaughan's *The State, Education, and Social Class in Mexico, 1880-1928* reveals that the privileging of the nation's capital and the north over the south in the distribution of education resources is an old pattern. So are conflicts between humanist versus utilitarian 'labour ready' visions of the purpose of education. Or the usage of scalar strategies by actors whose bases of political power is concentrated at the state, regional or national level, or fears by the authorities that teachers will organize communities against the ruling party (Vaughan 1982: 143-148). I have limited historical depth in favour of more space for empirically understanding contemporary education policy, and in order to draw deeper cross-case conclusions. In the core case study chapters, I have focused on a period roughly corresponding with the start of the 21st Century, which aligns with the emergence of a particular wave of neoliberal proposals for education, which I will argue in Chapter 2, has particular significance for teachers' work.

Within K-12 education, I focus principally on secondary schools and their teachers, due especially to my personal experience in this area as a high school teacher and a corresponding higher degree of access. All of my ethnographic school observations occurred at secondary schools, though I did interview some elementary teachers, particularly on questions like union strategy, which in NYC was appropriate as the UFT includes both primary and secondary teachers. In Mexico City, separate locals (sections) of the same union represent primary and secondary teachers, whereas in Toronto they are represented by separate unions. Some important differences exist between the distribution of grade levels and institutions in these sites. Most students in the Toronto District School Board attend an elementary school from junior kindergarten to grade eight, and secondary school from grades nine through twelve. The New

York Department of Education is organized into elementary schools (junior kindergarten to grade four), middle schools (grades five through eight) and high schools (grades nine through twelve). The system in Mexico City is the most distinct. The city-state's administration of the national Secretary of Public Education operates three year kindergartens, primary schools which are six years in duration and secondary schools which last for three years (corresponding to grades seven through nine). Upper level high school, which became compulsory nationwide in the early 2000s and is not fully enforced, is divided in Mexico City between preparatory feeder schools operated by the city's public universities and technical colleges, and the Instituto de Educación Media Superior (Institute of Mid-Superior Education) operated by the municipal government¹. Due to this complex system of governance, I have chosen to make the grade seven to nine secondary schools my primary basis of comparison in Mexico City, as these are administered directly by the secretary of public education, and its teachers are affiliated with the SNTE (Sindicato Nacional de los Trabajadores de la Educación), the national union of education workers, allowing for an easier basis of comparison with Toronto and New York.

1.2: Dissertation Overview

Chapter 2 explores the theoretical significance of six concepts integral to this study. I begin from the abstract: neoliberalism, policy mobilities, labour geography, and move to the more concrete and empirical: neoliberal education policy, teachers' professional autonomy and teachers' unions and social movements. I then attempt to synthesize these explanations, and

¹ Private institutions in Mexico accounted for 20.5 percent of enrolment in upper level high schools (medio-superior), and a high of 38 percent of vocational schools in 2003. However only 8 percent of primary students and 7 percent of secondary students attended private schools (Brambila 2008: 221).

introduce my concept of a labour geography of teacher autonomy, which undergirds what I hope is the broader theoretical contribution of this dissertation.

I explain the methodology behind this dissertation in Chapter 3, beginning with describing the significance to my research of my personal identity as a teacher and a union activist from a family of teachers. I then explain how my observations of the limited voice of teachers in education policy debates helped shape my field research, encouraging me to prioritize semi-structured, in-depth interviews with teachers and participatory observation in schools and at union events. This approach was considerably aided by my insider status. I then provide additional explanation of my choice of case study cities. In addition to drawing heavily on interviews with teachers, as well as policy makers, administrators, academics and union officials, my research is considerably informed by studying the content of the policies themselves, as well as how they are portrayed, presented or marketed by their advocates and critics. Finally, I offer an epistemology for studying teachers' autonomy. I link the persisting influence of positivist conceptions of social research to popular and academic legitimization of technocratic, 'data driven' policies like 'Value Added Measures', which attempt to deploy complex mathematical algorithms to define good or bad teachers and schools based on standardized test scores. In its place, I identify my affinity with the pragmatic, mixed methods approach advocated by C. Wright Mills, and at a more theoretical level, the work of critical realists.

Having established the theoretical and methodological underpinnings, I begin to approach the core of this study in Chapter 4, where I describe the geographies of neoliberal education policy. First, I give an overview of the history of teacher unionism in Toronto, New York and Mexico City, emphasizing features related to the status and definition of professional autonomy. I

then introduce several key texts and actors active in the neoliberalization of education in North America; a textual analysis which I use to also show key moments in its evolution. They are then integrated into a short history of the significance of New York, Mexico City and Toronto as important centres of education policy making. I then explore some international organizations which have produced a teachers' policy mobility. These range from the institutional: Education International and collaboration between the leaders of the National Education Workers Union (SNTE) of Mexico and the American Federation of Teachers and National Education Association; to the grassroots, including the United Caucus of Rank and File Educators (UCORE) and the Trinational Coalition in Defence of Public Education.

I present my first case study, New York City in Chapter 5. I begin by explaining the context of structural reforms to the governance and operations of the city's schools at the outset of the 21st Century, which created the context for policies that have greatly undermined the professional autonomy of teachers. The implementation under former Mayor Michael Bloomberg of mayoral control was crucial for concentrating power in the hands of him and his appointed executives, and subsequently facilitating the implementation of his neoliberal 'fast policy' (Peck & Theodore 2015). A key example was an extreme acceleration of earlier initiatives to break up large high schools into several smaller institutions within the same building, with over a hundred schools created in one year at its peak. The small sizes of these schools of a few hundred students and a few dozen teachers intersected with increased emphasis on preparation for high stakes Regents exams to result in a narrowing of the curriculum and pressure on faculty to teach to the test. The concept of a default neighbourhood school was also eliminated to increase competition for enrolment through 'school choice' among these many schools, assessed on the basis of test

score results. The most prestigious established exclusive entrance requirements that tend to perpetuate class and racial segregation. Changes in school finance intersected with increased powers for principals under mayoral control, to create an incentive to save money in the budgets of individual schools by hiring low seniority teachers. The sum of these and other policies like changes to tenure rules and higher turnover, dramatically shifted the balance of power in schools from teachers to administrators. Bloomberg's avalanche of neoliberal reforms were challenged by his left leaning successor. Mayor Bill De Blasio's administration attempted to alleviate the effects of high stakes testing, curb the expansion of charter schools and make some improvements in working conditions for teachers, such as by easing Bloomberg policies that made obtaining tenure increasingly difficult. Governor Andrew Cuomo's success in stymying De Blasio's efforts, amid state efforts to increase the punitiveness of teacher evaluations and high stakes standardized tests, provides an important case of scalar struggle. This example also demonstrates the weakness of the municipally bound United Federation of Teachers in effectively confronting the governor. I conclude with a look at the successful mobilization of the parent led Opt Out movement in 2015, that succeeded in reducing the weight of these tests, and the 2016 campaign for UFT union office of the dissident Movement of Rank and File Educators (MORE) for what can be learned for teacher-community solidarity that effective jumps scales.

Chapter 6 brings my study to Mexico City. I begin where the historical context described in Chapter 4 leaves off, by explaining the attempts at neoliberal education reform under the National Action Party (PAN) presidents Vicente Fox (2001-2006) and Felipe Calderon (2007-2012). In this era in which the influence of most other official unions declined, SNTE leader Elba Esther Gordillo consolidated her power base both within the union and in national

politics. She collaborated with Fox and Calderon in the creation of the National Institute for Education Evaluation (INEE), and the roll out of the nationwide standardized ENLACE exam in 2006. This exam ranked schools and when combined with the ‘Alliance for Quality Education’ initiative in 2008, purported to provide a basis for evaluating teachers on the basis of their student’s test scores. The CNTE and other dissident movements provided steady opposition, exempting the application of these national programs in states where their presence was strongest. An important turning point was the election of Enrique Peña Nieto and the return of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) to the presidency in 2012. In another textbook case of ‘fast policy’, he worked closely with his compatriot José Angel Gurria, general secretary of the OECD, Mexicanos Primero, the leadership of the PAN and the centre-left Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), to make major changes to constitutional statutes governing education within months of his inauguration. These amendments facilitated the subsequent passage of the Professional Teaching Service Law (Ley de Servicio Profesional Docente) with far reaching effects on teachers’ professional autonomy. One key element was eliminating a university degree in education as a prerequisite for K-12 teaching. This undermined both the distinct pedagogical knowledge base obtained by attending a faculty of education, and the shared professional identity of teachers, which had begun with the closure of public teachers’ colleges (normal schools) and their substitution by programs offered through private universities. Most crucial was a standardized national exam taken by teachers every three years as a condition for maintaining their employment. Peña Nieto’s reforms were built upon a scalar strategy in which policies entrenched in the national constitution would be more difficult for state governments to exempt themselves from, under pressure from the CNTE. Administrative functions that had been

decentralized in the 1980s and 1990s, and which had given the CNTE influence in states where it was powerful, were also reversed. Meanwhile funding for school facilities was downloaded to the municipal level, and in many cases to parents. I explain the factors that impeded the mass participation of Mexico City teachers in the CNTE's militant protests and strikes, despite the sentiment expressed by many educators that their profession was being undermined. I conclude with evaluating the changes in local and national politics that facilitated the participation of thousands of teachers from the nation's capital in the wave of strikes in the summer of 2016 that helped forced a compromise from Peña Nieto's government.

I discuss my home city of Toronto in Chapter 7. The contemporary scaling up of education governance in the province of Ontario began during the tenure of Mike Harris' Conservative Party from 1995-2002 (briefly discussed in Chapter 4) and was continued by their successors in the Liberal Party under premiers Dalton McGuinty and Kathleen Wynne. The shifting of taxing powers from the school district to the provincial government under Harris significantly undermined the autonomy of the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). Budget shortfalls have led to regular threats by the provincial government to suspend its elected board of trustees. The most important event shaping teacher and principal power relations was the removal of the latter from the teachers' federations and their reclassification as management in the late 1990s. Along with discussing the workplace dynamics that ensued, I explain how the Ontario Public School Board Association strongly advocated at the provincial level for increased management rights over the work of teachers. Standardized testing of students is present in Ontario, though with less punitive power against teachers and schools than in the US or Mexico. Nevertheless, Toronto teachers explain how they are the subject of pressure passed from the

Ontario Ministry of Education to the TDSB, to produce steadily rising scores, which has an effect on classroom instruction, felt differently in schools with high or low results. In a demographic context of declining student enrolment and fiscal austerity, Toronto also has dynamics of school choice, if not as pervasive as in New York. These are structured around specialty magnet programs, which while competing for students, have increased racial and class segregation between and within schools. Finally, I look at how collective bargaining followed the scaling up of finance, with province-wide negotiations taking precedent over local agreements. This process lead to an imposed province-wide contract in 2013, and confusing, protracted struggles over 2015-2016 at the provincial level, where much of the conflict centred on professional autonomy, and then the local level. Despite, unlike the UFT, having institutional mechanisms to engage in scaled up negotiations, OSSTF has not yet successfully navigated these multi scalar structures of bargaining, especially in the case of Toronto.

I end this dissertation by making some comparisons across my case studies, drawing some larger conclusions of what the experience of teachers in New York, Mexico City and Toronto mean for understanding the contemporary trajectory of neoliberal education policy. To take back the initiative from pro-privatization reformers that seek to degrade the basis of professionalism in order to take control of teachers' work, I contend that teachers' unions should be more proactive and assertive in defining the basis of professional autonomy. This means developing a clearer vision among its members of what constitutes good pedagogy and classroom practice. By elevating professional autonomy to the prominence of traditionally negotiated issues of salary and class sizes, teachers may collectively be able to shape the public schools and classrooms of the future.

2. Theoretical Areas and Conceptual Framework

2.1: Introduction

This chapter seeks to provide an overview of six concepts and their accompanying theoretical understandings. Each concept is integral to the approach of this dissertation and its focus on the significance of teachers' professional autonomy. These concepts are organized below in a progression from the broadest, more abstract categories in Part A: Neoliberalism, Policy and Labour, which are then applied to the more specific and concrete in Part B: Education Policy, Teachers' Professional Autonomy and Resistance. I conclude this chapter by bringing these layers of ideas together to explain how the capacity of North American educators to exercise agency in their work in the classroom is the crucial obstacle to the neoliberalization of education. These are multi scalar struggles involving various levels of governments, labour organizations and policy advocates, which are profoundly rooted in the particular historical contexts of the local communities in which teachers work.

Part A: Neoliberalism, Policy Mobilities and Labour

2.2: Neoliberalism

For the purposes of a simple definition, I define neoliberalism as a project to extend and intensify markets into new spheres of society, as through privatization, and while doing so, reinforce the political power of the economic elite. I make this definition within the contradictions between neoliberalism as an articulated ideology, versus its historically and geographically specific practice. I describe some of these tensions below. Geographer Simon Springer (2012) argues that the central distinction among various conceptualizations of

neoliberalism is between it as a form of ‘governmentality’, an ideology which generates its own ‘common sense’ from the bottom up, or as a top down strategy for renewing ruling class political power. The former view is most associated with Michel Foucault and post structuralism (Foucault 2008; Gane 2014), while the latter is espoused by Marxists exemplified by David Harvey. Many others like Peck (2010, see also Tickell & Peck 2002), adopt analyses combining aspects of both. I provide an overview here of these perspectives, seeing both as relevant for understanding the contemporary transformation of education and teachers’ work.

Foucault presents as a foundational concept the notion of the ‘individual as the entrepreneur of the self’, subsequently popularized as human capital theory, a profound explanation of the ideological shifting of neoliberalism from both neoclassical and Marxist notions of labour. Rather than a worker selling their labour, individuals are investing their ‘human capital’ with the expectation of a return. Foucault explains, “...the stake in all neoliberal analyses is the replacement every time of *homo economicus* as partner of exchange with a *homo economicus* as entrepreneur of himself, being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of his own earnings.” (Foucault 2008: 226). This may sound merely like a way of stripping an understanding of the asymmetrical power relations between classes recognized by both Marxists and many classical economists, however its implications are actually far reaching. The notion of human capital explains neoliberalism’s rationale for why markets should penetrate into social areas previously not considered as potentially ‘for profit’, including education.

These ideas resemble Susan Robertson’s (2000: 209-210) notion of neoliberalism replacing service-oriented career educators with an ideal of the ‘teacher as entrepreneur’, who

exchange job security, a secure salary, pension, and union membership, for performance-based contracts in which they endeavour to foment ‘innovation’. Foucault further notes how neoliberalism’s extension of an economic analysis into ‘social’ fields like education, leads to a “permanent political criticism” (2008: 246) of the financial cost and benefit of government and political action, foreshadowing contemporary ‘fiscal austerity’. It demands schools to be economically viable, answerable to their contribution to the economy and the ‘intrusion’ of the state into otherwise market activities.

Neoliberalism in practice has been less than a thoroughly consistent expression of an ideology of expanding and deepening markets. David Harvey argues that neoliberal ideas were taken up by national elites beginning in the mid-1970s as part of an overarching political imperative towards restoring ruling class power and high profits, threatened in many regions of the world by rising left, labour and social movements.² With average economic growth rates in most developed countries and the world as a whole below the postwar Keynesian era, capitalists accrue wealth under neoliberalism through creative destruction via accumulation through dispossession. Forms include the privatization of public resources and the expansion of the financial sector and its use of debt to exploit fiscal crises. He emphasizes the political unevenness of the neoliberalizing world, as with the survival of strong unions and welfare states in some countries beyond the heydays of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, as crucial to understanding the geography of neoliberalism (Harvey 2007). Neil Brenner, Jamie Peck and Nik Theodore (2010) critically assess a range of models offered by geographers and comparative policy studies that seek to explain why ‘actually existing’ neoliberalism has been so variegated

² See also: Glyn (2007); Panitch & Gindin (2012).

across space. Distinct political contexts cause neoliberalization to occur differently across cities and regions within as well as between nation states. Harvey and Peck, and especially Naomi Klein (2007), widely concur that neoliberalism makes many of its greatest advances by exploiting crises, in order to rapidly implement comprehensively new governance structures. The latter two cite as an (in)famous example; the replacement of over 80 percent of New Orleans's public schools with privately run, non-union charter schools in the wake of the devastation of Hurricane Katrina in 2006, the highest proportion of any local school system in the United States. In Ontario, under the hard-right Conservative government of Mike Harris, education minister John Snoblen in 1995 proposed "creating a useful crisis" to facilitate vast changes to the province's school system (MacLellan 2009: 52).

Springer provides a useful critique of the paralyzing tendency of some left critics to describe neoliberalism as monolithic, "an unstoppable force" (2012: 135), by recognizing the resilience of grassroots movements and pre-figurative politics generally, in the vein of Gibson-Graham's post-capitalism (Springer 2010, 2014). He also accuses Harvey and other Marxist geographers of categorically condemning political projects as neoliberal that seek to decentralize power, while advocating a focus on resistance at the national level, which Springer contends leads to endorsing top-down, hierarchical modes of organization. Springer echoes the 'flat ontology' of Marston et al's (2005) call for "a human geography without scale" (Springer 2014: 408), which would facilitate a focus on more anarchist forms of organization. The call for recognizing the agency of groups (in this case, especially of workers), rather than see them primarily as the victims of economic processes, is a key principle of labour geography, and a guide for this dissertation. However I find the dismissal of the geographic concept of scale

frankly bewildering. Despite Springer's (2014) assertion that he does not pretend to make the scalar organization of power go away by not acknowledging it, the call to 'forget about scale' is unhelpful if one wishes to understand how state authorities at various levels of government have developed education policy, and how organized teachers have responded locally, regionally or nationally, depending on the circumstances. Springer's caricature of Harvey's focus on the state as a key site for contesting neoliberalism is as politically unproductive as arguing that creating a small radical alternative school precludes working to transform the rest of the school district.

Emphasizing the continually unfolding, historically and geographically contingent nature of this political process, Peck prefers the term neoliberalization to neoliberalism, "...since the latter tend to rely too heavily on regime-like conceptions, bracketed in time and space." (2010: 20-21) Amid the trials and errors of the neoliberalization process, Peck and Tickell (2002) identify an historical pattern of 'roll back' and 'roll out' phases. The former signifies the initial neoliberal attack on existing structures of the welfare state (privatization, cuts to universal programs, attacks on unions, implementation of monetarist policies, etc), generally predominant in the 1980s (beginning in New York City with the fiscal crisis of the mid 1970s). The latter consists of measures from the mid-1990s onwards to deal with market failures, acute poverty, concerted resistance and other crises associated with roll back, including regulating privatized agencies, funding anti-poverty NGOs and expanding the penal system. If Thatcher and Reagan were the protagonists of the roll back era, Tony Blair and Bill Clinton were the harbingers of roll out neoliberalism. While roll back represents a reaction to the Keynesian welfare state and state socialism, roll out is a 'positive' expression of neoliberal governance, replete with contradictions and politically necessary compromises (Peck 2010: 23).

This conceptualization of neoliberalization into somewhat distinct historical, geographically uneven phases, provides a helpful means for understanding the particular form of the contemporary struggle over education policy at the heart of this dissertation. Public education, at least in the three case study cities at the centre of this dissertation, has been a relatively strong point of resistance to neoliberal ‘roll-back’, at least up to the early 21st Century. Though within the three countries in which these cities are located, this experience has been uneven. The contested neoliberal education reforms from the early 2000s onwards described in the case studies below, could be understood as a context in which state actors (backed by various non-governmental and corporate agents) attempt to ‘roll-back’ existing forms of public education through chronic budget cuts and attempts to weaken unions. More or less simultaneously, the ‘roll out’ of neoliberalization can be seen in the impact on teachers’ work of standardized testing in evaluation, changing workplace power relations, and many other factors discussed below. The convergence of these reactive and creative forms of neoliberalism can help explain the difficulties faced by their advocates in getting these policies to stick in public education, especially as they move across space.

2.3: Policy Mobilities

I start from the argument that within the contexts of contemporary Canada, US and Mexico, domestic state actors at various scales exercise considerable agency in mobilizing education policy. They are not coerced to do so by multilateral agencies like the OECD, the

World Bank or the International Monetary Fund (IMF).³ Instead the primary factor is the balance of power between domestic political groups.⁴ When asked about the role of the World Bank, a senior official in Mexico's Secretary of Public Education (SEP) provided this example, illustrating both a desire for autonomy from the Bank, and how privatization has filled in the absence of new public resources, "Previously, the Mexican government would get a loan from the World Bank to build a highway. Now the Mexican government contracts directly with foreign investors to finance and operate a new toll highway. Hopefully we're getting to the point where we don't have to borrow anymore." (SEP official: Interviewed Jun. 2015). I argue that the recommendations provided particularly by the OECD and the World Bank, based upon some of the most extensive comparative international research on education systems available, are drawn upon to publicly legitimize decisions driven by governments. Also significant for the research base on which they draw, as well as their political influence, are domestic think tanks and research centres including the Brookings Institution, Teachers' College, Fraser Institute, People for Education, the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and Mexicanos Primero. The most significant direct vertical exercise of power to implement policy in this context is conducted by centralized upper levels of government (state/provincial or federal) downloading responsibility onto municipal and school-level authorities. These are seen in the No Child Left Behind from 2002 to 2015 in the US, the Alliance for Quality Education (ACE) in 2008 and the Professional

³ In the 1982 debt crisis, Mexico was compelled to privatize dozens of state industries along with other neoliberal 'conditionalities' for the loans it received from the IMF; a precedent marking the end of Import Substitution Industrialization and economic nationalism (Torres 1991: 117).

⁴ Verger (2009) makes this case while studying the motivations for national trade representatives in the Doha round of the World Trade Organization determining whether to offer to liberalize their country's education systems in exchange for concessions from other participants. He found that the Chilean government's capacity to ignore teachers' unions contributed to its decision to offer substantial private investment opportunities in education. These options were kept off the table by Argentine representatives whose government negotiated with labour.

Teaching Service Law since 2013 in Mexico, and the standardized tests of Ontario's Education Quality and Accountability Office since 1996.

Accordingly, this dissertation asks how policy is used by local, regional and national states to support political objectives, and the extent to which this involves a 'mobility' of policy across borders. To what extent can the movement of these policies explain the similarities of the neoliberalization of education governance across the diverse jurisdictions of North America? Alternately, how do teachers' unions and movements mobilize policy from below as they resist or collaborate with these proposals? The significant roles of New York, Mexico City and Toronto as sites of education policy formation, the genealogy and movement of key texts and actors in the evolution of North America's neoliberal turn and the agency of teachers' organizations will be explored below in Chapter 4. Here, I will briefly review the development of key concepts that are the most relevant to the context of the neoliberalization of public education in policy mobility, an emerging field in which geographers have been especially influential.

Since 2008, geographers Jamie Peck and Nik Theodore have led the formation of the critical study of policy mobilities as an interdisciplinary research area. Extending from Peck's study (1996) of workfare programs and local labour markets, they researched (2010) the 'fast' social policy of workfare conditional cash transfers. Originally implemented nationally by the Mexican government in the mid 1990s to mitigate extreme poverty in the midst of social unrest, it was brought to New York City by Mayor Bloomberg in the 2000s. This case emphasizes how in the contemporary context, policy can move across scales, but also from the South to the global North. Peck and Theodore use this example to introduce their concept of 'fast policy': the movement of ideas developed by technocratic circles of experts that liaise relatively easily across

borders, and operate within closed policy networks to quickly implement new programs. The makers of ‘fast policy’ typically claim to be politically pragmatic, their only ideology is a fealty to ‘best practices’ supported by quantitative data.

Peck (2011) subsequently lays out his critique of the policy transfer studies that became orthodox in political science in the 1990s (typically focused on the rapid ascendancy of globalization with the end of the Cold War), in which rational governmental actors utilized their perfect knowledge to borrow ‘best practices’ for their jurisdiction. According to Peck, these scholars gloss over the ideological contexts in which policy decisions were made, while attempting to exorcise geography by neglecting to consider how policies will inevitably ‘mutate’ as their proponents attempt to implement them in places very different from where they originated. These ideas are further developed by Peck and Theodore in *Fast Policy: Experimental Statecraft at the Thresholds of Neoliberalism* (2015). Their case studies on the global movement of conditional cash transfer and participatory budgeting use the concept of head winds and tail winds to explain how the selection of policies from elsewhere and their adaptation by their importers to fit local realities is shaped by prestigious multilateral institutions like the World Bank and the OECD, and a more abstract neoliberal ‘common sense’. Policies going against these dominant forces still attract emulators abroad but will not receive warm accolades from the Bank. They also discuss the methodological value of participatory observation, attending the conferences where peripatetic advocates ply their craft among policy makers, as a form of ethnographic research. They caution academics not to allow these immersions to block out the pursuit of dissident voices, especially of communities directed affected by these policies.

Recognizing the limitations on publicly available documents describing the (often politically sensitive) work of policy consultants, Russell Prince (2012) also emphasizes the importance of ethnographic methods to study the individuals and firms directly involved to understand how they function. He pursues how policy consultants have contributed to neoliberalization, outlining the emergence of major consulting firms and think tanks since the 1980s, contracted by governments to evaluate the public sector and advocate for its privatization. Prince shares conclusions reached by Brenner, Peck and Theodore (2010) that in part through these expert networks, neoliberalism has affected processes of governance to an extent that not only are policies themselves neoliberalized, so is the means by which policies are developed. Echoing Peck's (2011) critique of conventional policy transfer studies:

The assembling of sociomaterialities and technical systems across space is a fraught, multidirectional process. The resulting assemblages in which policies circulate are not necessarily what anyone intended, and their durability can range from short-lived to relatively enduring. They do allow us, however, insight into the day-to-day work of constructing geographies of governance, and a perspective on the often uneven and chaotic geographies that result. This last point speaks to the value of work on policy transfer conducted in the geographical literature. It moves beyond political science conceptions by making history and context more central, rather than treating them as background. (Prince 2012: 193)

Eugene McCann and Kevin Ward concur, favouring geography's emphasis on understanding the role of "place, space and scale coupled with an anthropological/sociological attention to 'small p' politics both within and beyond institutions of governance" (2013: 2) in critical policy mobility studies.⁵

Working within comparative education policy, Stephen J. Ball and Carolina Junemann (2012) use the concept of network governance to describe the mobility and proliferation of

⁵ See also: Larnar & Laurie (2010).

neoliberal education policy in the UK. They explain how beginning in the 1980s under Thatcher and accelerating under subsequent governments, the state provisioning of education has been undermined through privatization, de-professionalizing of teachers and weakening of their unions. The result of the outsourcing of public service delivery has been a shift from government to governance, in which private actors take increasing roles coordinated and regulated by the centralized state. In this context of governance by ‘best practices’ and audits, networks of private businesses, philanthropies, think tanks and wealthy individuals have gained considerable influence in policy making in tandem with their contracting of education services. Both appear to have advanced more extensively than in the North American case studies here. Policy mobility in this context is both the means for spreading proposals for the neoliberalization of education, and the structure of governance for a neoliberalized school system. Ball and Junemann describe their methodological approach to network ethnographies through extensive interviews with practitioners, to construct web diagrams depicting connections between individuals, organizations and firms that comprise specific policy networks. Their policies have frequently elicited considerable resistance from organized teachers in the case studies presented here, particularly as they have seen their professional autonomy in the classroom challenged.

2.4: Labour Geography

Labour is a key group that has contested efforts to neoliberalize the landscapes in which workers live and are employed. Whether defensively by opposing the relocation of production and investment, or proactively by pursuing new strategies for organizing in urban service sectors or by building transnational unions, labour has struggled to maintain and expand its agency

within the adverse circumstances of neoliberal globalization. Peck (1996) establishes a source of the fundamental imbalance of spatial power between workers and capital that has only increased in the neoliberal era of free trade agreements: labour is overwhelmingly (if not exclusively) local.⁶ Labour markets are also segmented by social regulation, resulting in widely ranging employment patterns, incomes and job security, affected by new forms of flexibility under neoliberalism (Peck 1996). These new forms include workplace relocation, outsourcing and recurring struggles over socially constructed definitions of skilled labour or the speed-up of work processes. The public K-12 education sector is among the most regulated labour markets in Canada, the US and Mexico, due in large part to a very high rate of unionization. As the case studies show, a major way that teachers' work has been changed by neoliberal policies has been the growth of the proportion of the workforce employed in a precarious, 'untenured' capacity.

Andrew Herod was a principal founder of labour geography (Bergene, Endresen & Knutsen 2010). Like Peck, he critiques (1997) the dominant tendency of economic geography to treat workers as merely another factor of production determining the location of firms. Herod challenged not only neoclassical geographers, but also Marxists who he argued all too often portrayed workers as passive victims of capitalist spatial strategies. Herod argued that organized workers exercise agency by drawing on spatial strategies to contest capitalist power and remake the landscapes in which they work and live to better meet their needs. He finds that workers are pragmatic, organizing on local, regional, national and transnational scales, sometimes entering into alliances with elements of capital, and sometimes against the interests of other groups of workers (Herod 2001, 2010). He argues that, "industrial relations specialists and labor and social

⁶ Herod argues (2010) that we should avoid a dichotomy. Some groups of workers are much more mobile than others, an unevenness also found among sectors of capital, strongly influencing the strategies of both groups.

historians... have generally tended to view geography in terms of how place functions as a “context” for social action rather than in terms of how space and spatial relations may serve as sources of power and objects of struggle...” (Herod 2001: 2). I certainly view the political contexts of Toronto, New York and Mexico City, and the state/province and nations in which they are located as crucial for determining the struggles of teachers against the neoliberalization of education. It is my intention to do so in a way that recognizes the agency of teachers, insofar as they also have a capacity to shape this context, while they are most certainly shaped by it.

Applying this frame of the contingent nature of workers’ agency to use scalar strategies to the education sector, Sweeney (2013) studied the rescaling of contemporary collective bargaining in Ontario, with key decision-making increasingly shifting from school board and teachers’ union local negotiations to province-wide discussions in which the provincial government and central union leaders play a much more direct role. This study is also important because labour geography has not yet looked significantly at the public sector and how its workers employ spatial strategies despite not being employed in tradable goods industries and so not part of global supply chains or subject to plant relocations. He demonstrates, particularly in the current context of the rescaling of public service provision as explained by Brenner et al (2010), public sector workers must grapple with multiple scales of state authority, an issue present in each of the case studies in this dissertation, within an overall context of the centralization of power and downloading of responsibility.

Steven Tufts (2007) and others describe how in the context of deindustrialized post-Fordist neoliberalism, world cities have become strategic sites for capital accumulation and private services, often performed by racialized immigrant workforces in precarious employment.

The three case studies of this dissertation share the characteristic of being the most important ‘world city’ in their respective countries, as defined by a concentration of political and economic power and a high degree of influence facilitated by strong connections to other centres around the world. Tufts agrees with Herod (2001, 2010) and Wills (2002) that determining the most strategic scale on which workers are best able to organize and act in a given context is the key question of labour geography. While broadly interested in and supportive of organizing efforts that explicitly draw on a spatial analysis as situated within the neoliberalized environment of the world city, Tufts also issues some cautions on the limits to concentrating on the global scale present within the city. Brogan (2014) adds to the study of labour in the world city, within the context of the privatization of Chicago’s public education system and its relation to the gentrification of its racially and class stratified landscapes. He positions the Chicago Teachers Union, led since 2012 by the Caucus of Rank and File Educators which intensively organizes its membership and constructs extensive community alliances, as an important actor within larger struggles for social justice in this neoliberalized world city. Brogan argues that the power and media attention of teachers’ struggles are best located at the metropolitan scale.

Herod (2001) uses a case study of a successful global campaign by locked out aluminum smelter workers in the US to reiterate his contention drawing on Gibson-Graham, that globalized capital is beatable. He also presents a distinction between ‘accommodative’ acts of international solidarity, in which Northern unionists ask labour in the South to help prevent the relocation of their jobs, with little consideration to confronting the systemic inequity between the two regions, and ‘transformative solidarity’ in which a genuine relationship of equals is constructed, concerned with the interests of both groups of workers. Kay (2011) pursues these themes

studying how leading up to NAFTA and afterwards, cross border relationships were built between unions in Canada and the US and in Mexico. Her impressive fieldwork covered a range of private sector unions that did or did not build alliances. This enables one to address critiques by Das (2012), that labour geography has given disproportional attention to ‘good news stories’, while overlooking the many more instances in which workers lacked sufficient agency to effectively oppose neoliberal global capitalism.

Marxist inspired critiques such as Das (2012) take aim at what they see as the reformist agenda of labour geography, arguing that workers cannot exercise genuine agency unless they explicitly define themselves in class terms in opposition to capitalism. I argue that dismissing the possibilities for workers achieving significant local victories under the globalized power of capital, substantially narrows the possible scope for labour’s action in our context, making the potential future composition of a revolutionary global working class difficult to imagine. Asking why labour internationalism has been so limited, Kay’s (2011) findings follow Wills (2002, 2005) and Herod (2001), that cross border solidarity has been consistently led by ideologically driven progressive-socialist activists. Cold War or contemporary nationalist and racist world views have acted as blockages, as Chapter 4 will discuss in the historical context of teacher union internationalism in the Americas.

Castree (2007), Tufts and Savage (2009) consider future directions for labour geography in the context of neoliberalism. They recommend that labour geography needs to expand its scope to include new groups of workers, particularly in the South.⁷ This shortcoming creates the risk of labour geography extrapolating theoretical conclusions from studies of workers in the

⁷ See also Bergene, Endresen & Knutsen (2010).

North onto contexts in the South. This dissertation speaks to this concern with a truly continental focus, including Mexico alongside Canada and the US, the latter two of which are more frequently studied together. Like these authors, this dissertation also discusses alternative forms of worker organization to conventional trade unions.

While employers cannot (yet) relocate schools to geographies where teachers can be paid the lowest salaries, this dissertation demonstrates that the challenges faced by the neoliberalization of their work is strikingly similar across North America, leading to opportunities for strategic alliances beyond the regional or national scales of their public sector employers as identified by Coe & Jordhus-Lier (2010: 37). Prospects for international teachers' solidarity are explored in chapter 4 and the conclusion. I look at how the national SNTE under Juan Diaz de la Torre since 2013 has strived to compensate for the legitimacy it lacks among its members by gaining endorsements from the leadership of Education International -the global federation of teachers' unions, and closer relations with the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association. Meanwhile through the Trinational Coalition in Defense of Public Education, the CNTE draws on international solidarity from OSSTF, the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, and left leaning teacher locals in the US, the United Teachers of Los Angeles and the Chicago Teachers' Union.

Part B: Education Policy, Teachers' Professional Autonomy & Resistance

2.5: Neoliberal Education Policy

The heart of this dissertation studies the contemporary experience of neoliberal education policy as it impacts teachers' professional autonomy in three local case studies, New York,

Mexico City and Toronto, and how ideas and policies, both from elite state and non-governmental actors, and teacher activists, move across borders. A scalar analysis of political, economic and cultural contexts at the local, state/provincial, national and global level are essential in attempting to explain the success or failure of these policies (Ginsburg 1991a). This must be done without over-emphasizing structural explanations and neglecting the roles and actions of individuals and groups. Without being overly deterministic, I believe my research supports Ginsburg's contention, "political and economic factors are more important in shaping educational reforms than are factors internal to the educational system itself." (1991a: 7)

A critical approach will recognize that education policy, like all areas of politics, is subject to tensions and conflicts on the basis of class, race and gender, and other axes through which power is unevenly distributed in society. Reforms developed by predominantly male senior administrators and politicians impact teachers and other education workers who are mostly women. Likewise, policies around parental engagement and user fees disproportionately affect mothers and other care givers (Ginsburg 1991b: 378). Funding cutbacks and school closings hit students from poor families the hardest, who are also more likely to be racialized.

An analysis of the role of the state⁸ in capitalist society is also crucial. More than simply an 'executive committee for the capitalist class', its relative autonomy is defined by internal tensions as well as external pressures from its dual roles of both acting to perpetuate capitalist accumulation and profitability (and thereby its own revenue base), while maintaining social legitimacy and cohesion (Ginsburg 1991a: 20-24). Cut public education too much, and either through popular opposition or reduced infrastructure capacity, the state risks losing this crucial

⁸ Considered in this sense to include its agencies and publicly funded NGOs.

institution for social reproduction and ideological hegemony (Ginsburg 1991b: 379-380). I concur with the Globally Structured Agenda for Education (GSAE) paradigm articulated by Roger Dale (2000), Verger (2009) and others within comparative education studies:

Its main ontological assumption is that the world capitalist economy is the driving force of globalization and the first causal source of multiple transformations manifested in different policy areas, including education. Consequently, capitalism's expansion and transformations directly and indirectly affect contemporary education systems, although its effects are also locally mediated. ... Although globalization presents common features around the world, its effects in education and in other fields are mediated by domestic factors and contingencies. (Verger 2009: 380-381)

From the GSAE perspective, political and economic dynamics, though their manifestations are spatially uneven, are essential for understanding education policies.

Peck and Tickell's concept described above, of a 'roll back' wave of neoliberal policies from the late 1970s through the early 1990s is relevant to understand changes made in education. In various circumstances, they were a reversal of a progressive expansion of public education, triggered in the early 1980s by recession in developed countries like the US and Canada and drastic debt crisis in the developing world, including Mexico. Political elites now pushed a new imperative of state austerity and increasing their nation's competitiveness in the context of globalization (Ginsburg 1991b: 370-371; Robertson 2008: 15; Klees 2008).

'Roll back' education policies centred around the privatization and deprofessionalizing or disempowering teachers' work, as they do now, though the specific forms varied. A key mechanism for accomplishing this was a scalar shifting of decision-making power from local to national governments, and a corresponding downloading of responsibility without authority to the school level (Ginsburg 1991b: 383-384). This remains the dominant trajectory of education governance, as will be seen in this dissertation's case studies. The first wave occurred in

England, Australia and New Zealand, marking an abrupt end to a period at least since the 1940s, in which teachers' unions enjoyed a degree of corporatist relations or close collaboration with education authorities. Within a centralizing national government, these authorities shifted their political stance to overtly favouring collaboration with business groups (Ginsburg 1991b: 373-374). The latter had an antagonistic vision of education that was pro-employer, both in its content and goals (shifting from humanistic growth to workplace preparation and entrepreneurialism) and its form (the process of teaching subordinated to increasingly scripted curriculum in preparation for standardized testing). Its advocates made heavy usage of supportive policies from the US and the UK, "even the titles and texts of reports point the way to educational reform explicitly borrowed from similar documents in the United States." (Ginsburg 1991b: 378) The centralization of control over education policy in these countries in each case was related to a goal of limiting the occupational authority of teachers, who were popularly portrayed as having too much self-interested power over the institutions where they worked. A major element of rollback education policies in these three countries in the 1980s consisted of weakening teachers' unions by legally restricting the scope of collective bargaining, enabling governments to substantially alter their employment, "...a process of proletarianization or deskilling and depowering of teachers, whereby they become the implementors of policy and practice conceived and controlled by others." (Ginsburg 1991b: 384).

In regions of the developing world where teachers' unions were already weak and governments were more desperate for international loans to pay rising interest rates, the social consequences in this era were more dire. Under the aegis of the 'Washington Consensus', a term which describes the heyday of neoliberal orthodoxy among top multilateral institutions and

national governments parallel to Peck and Tickell's 'roll back' phase, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank pushed for tuition fees for public primary and secondary schools. Student enrolment plummeted in the Sub Saharan and Latin American countries that acquiesced to these demands in exchange for loans. Their governments reversed policy by the late 1990s, and UNESCO's Education For All campaign within the UN's Millennium Development Goals called for free universal K-12 schooling. The World Bank was slower and more reluctant to adjust (Klees 2008: 314-315).⁹ While some of the more extreme experiments in privatization in the roll back phase were mitigated, underlying political demands for austerity in the public sector and efforts to weaken teachers' unions proved to have considerable longevity (Carnoy 1999; Robertson 2008: 17-20).

In the early 21st Century, neoliberal reformers increasingly turned their scrutiny to the practices and processes of teachers' work (Cuban 2009, 2013). They castigated teachers as a profession for the failings of education, and provided recommendations to government officials for how to increase surveillance and control over their work and employment. Armed with studies anchored by questionable mathematical models, some claim to be able to measure how much a good or bad teacher adds or subtracts from their student's future earnings as workers, and extrapolated from there, their cumulative impact on the economy as a whole (Ravitch 2013a:

⁹ Education was rapidly privatized in 1980s post-coup Chile with the implementation of vouchers for enrolling students in public and private schools, at the urging of economists from Milton Friedman's Chicago School, citing small scale municipal experiments in the US. The military government prohibited the teachers' union from negotiating salaries, class sizes and other aspects of their working conditions. With the segregation of poor students in hollowed out public schools, corrupt private operators, and a massive reallocation of school resources towards marketing and standardized tests, the democratically elected government in 1988 limited vouchers. However with its continued emphasis on test scores, the proliferation of private schools and weak teacher unions, Chile remains the most neoliberalized education system in the Americas (Klees 2008: 323).

107-108). *Great Teachers: How to Raise Student Learning in Latin America and the Caribbean*

(2014), a report commissioned by the World Bank, is typical of this genre. It concludes:

[T]he quality of teachers in Latin America and the Caribbean is the binding constraint on the region's progress toward world-class education systems. Low standards for entry into teaching; low-quality candidates; salaries, promotions, and job tenure delinked from performance; and weak school leadership have produced low professionalism in the classroom and poor education results. Moving to a new equilibrium will be difficult, and will require recruiting, grooming and motivating a new breed of teacher. (Bruns & Luque 2014: 40)

For the authors of this report, teachers are indolent employees who in the absence of effective discipline, will do the least amount and lowest quality work possible, a worldview reminiscent of neoliberal theorists who postulated on the inherent selfishness of humans. For Chester Finn Jr and Michael Petrilli, president and vice president of the right wing Thomas B. Fordham Institute and researchers at the free market Hoover Institution, if only self-described 'outsiders' like themselves were given a free hand to apply their ideas for how public education should function (eliminate teacher job security, increase the managerial power of principals over their staff, more charter schools, etc), its problems would be resolved. That many local school boards and state administrations reject these proposals as "adults versus change," means that they are controlled by teachers' unions (Finn & Petrilli 2013: 29)¹⁰. Fortunately for government officials and politicians, the amount of funding and resources which they provide to schools are seldom questioned. Teachers' unions are the adversary, as the authors remind governments that, "[T]he

¹⁰ Their contempt for school boards is captured in this passage, "In far too many places, well-educated, civic-minded, and reasonably prosperous people find district-level politics daunting and painful. ... Serving on such boards can also bring unpleasantness: long, boring evenings listening to public testimony; onerous (and costly) election campaigns; the risk of name-calling, picketing, and racial acrimony; painful responsibilities such as deciding whether to close and 'reconstitute' neighborhood schools; and agendas that are laden with micromanagement issues and short on decisions about fundamental policy and direction. ... Under these circumstances who would want to serve on a school board?...aspiring politicians, union puppets, individuals with some cause or scheme they yearn to inflict on everyone's children, and former employees of the system with a score to settle." (Finn & Petrilli 2013: 31)

goals of teachers' organizations are not congruent with the goals of education policy makers or the interests of education beneficiaries -including students, parents, and employers who need skilled workers." (Bruns & Luque 2014: 38)

In their 2013 report for the global teachers' union federation Education International, Antoni Verger, Hülya Altinyelken and Mireille de Koning present case studies from seven developing countries of what they describe as Global Managerial Education Reforms (GMERs). The policies share characteristics including privatization and the de-professionalization of teachers' work, as through increased standardized testing and more prescribed pedagogy. Their study surveys the contemporary 'roll-out' form of neoliberal education policy, or the 'Post-Washington Consensus' (Robertson 2008). They define GMERs as:

...tend[ing] to modify the working conditions of teachers and their responsibilities, as well as how teachers' performance is assessed and judged by the state and society. Managerial reforms also challenge the professional status of teachers, and reshape teaching as a profession. To some extent, this is the consequence of the fact that the managerial focus of GMERs converts teachers into objects of intervention and assets to be managed rather than to subjects of educational change. ...these types of reforms, due to their disciplinary character, do not only change what teachers do, but also who teachers are or are supposed to be. (Verger et al 2013: 2)

In contrast to roll back era reforms in which teachers were often presented as relatively insignificant compared to the introduction of new technology in the classroom, for instance, the report argues that in roll out reforms, teachers are the centre of attention. Their performance or 'quality' is judged as the most critical input into education, making vitally important the shaping of their work and its evaluation.

Again, I argue in this dissertation that the transformation of teachers' work, generally in a direction towards de-professionalization and disempowerment, *is the most important element of*

contemporary neoliberal education policy (Rezai-Rashti 2009; Pinto 2015). Despite vastly different local and national contexts, this broad trajectory, albeit to varying extents and manifesting itself in distinct forms, can be seen in the three case studies here: New York, Mexico City and Toronto. These studies focus on a historical period beginning in roughly the early 2000s, a time of significant changes in education governance in each of these three cities that relate with characteristics of the ‘roll out’ phase of neoliberal policy. In Toronto, this corresponds with the election of the Ontario Liberal Dalton McGuinty/Kathleen Wynne governments in 2003. In New York City this period is defined by the election of mayors Michael Bloomberg in 2002 and Bill de Blasio in 2013 and State Governor Andrew Cuomo in 2010. In Mexico it is defined by the Quality Schools Program of Vicente Fox (2001-2006), the standardized ENLACE student exam (2006-2013) and the ‘Alliance for Quality Education’ (ACE in Spanish) under National Action Party (PAN) President Felipe Calderon and SNTE union leader Elba Esther Gordillo. The latter program was adopted into the Mexican Constitution and accompanying legislation under President Enrique Peña Nieto of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in 2012-2013.

I explore in detail how teachers’ work in these cities is being neoliberalized in the early 21st Century on the basis of five common dynamics. First, changes in governance, entailing the centralization of education policy-making to higher levels and a corresponding weakening of local democratic voice have facilitated the rollout of subsequent wide ranging reforms, through mayoral control in New York, the shifting from state to federal authorities in Mexico, and municipal school boards to the provincial government in Ontario. Second, workplace power relations between principals and teachers has changed particularly in New York and Ontario, from collegiality to a hierarchy of managers and employees, giving administrators more control

over the way teachers use their time attacking teacher autonomy. Resistance to a similar shift in Mexico has been a major frustration for neoliberal reformers, though ‘School Based Management’ would give Mexican principals substantial control over school budgets, as it has in the US. Third, the rise of standardized testing has had substantial impact on shaping the means and ends of teaching in all three countries, particularly in Mexico through ENLACE and the US, through No Child Left Behind and then even more insidiously through Race To the Top, where it is tied directly to the job security of teachers. Fourth, in large urban districts with economies of scale, ‘school choice’ schemes aim to create a market in which public schools compete for student enrolment, in large part on the basis of standardized test scores, particularly in New York where this is most advanced, but also in Toronto on the basis of boutique specialty programs. I argue that these forms of enrolment competition distort teaching by exacerbating the tendency to ‘teach to the test’, while perpetuating student segregation and unbalancing the ‘classroom ecosystem’. Finally, a key variable to the degree that these common policies have been implemented has been the response of the teachers’ unions locally and at higher levels of organization. I will especially explore how political culture shapes the response of local unions, how these organizations have responded to the scaling up of governance and their successes and failures in building broader alliances to challenge the adverse consequences of these policies.

Privatization coupled with public sector austerity, remain key objectives of neoliberal education policy. Pecuniary interest in education have increased for capitalists looking for a good return on investment, facing an early 21st Century forecast of low rates of growth interspersed with recessions for the foreseeable future. With limited new markets expected to emerge on the horizon and record high stockpiles of uninvested capital sitting in banks, privatizing K-12 public

education, worth an estimated \$600 billion in the US in 2013, presents a vast and potentially relatively secure way to turn a profit (McGuinn & Manna 2013: 12; Mason 2016). In most regions of the US, a primary vehicle for its achievement are charters, privately run, publicly funded schools that may be for or not for profit (though the management firms contracted to administer the schools are nearly always for profit). They save large sums of money by employing non-union teachers, with high turnover rates and minimal benefits or pension obligations (Levine & Levine 2014: 377-378). Many American school boards retain high priced ‘efficiency’ consultants, who recommend the contracting of their colleagues in the for-profit education services sector. Firms specialized in writing report cards and developing software to replace math teachers are considered good investments, as are companies contracted to run Special Education programs or provide outsourced substitute teachers. In many states of Mexico, a key form of privatization is represented by the fees parents must pay to ensure their children’s schools have plumbing or photocopier paper. In every province of Canada, schools supplement their publicly provided funding with fundraising, sometimes including commercial sponsorships, yielding vastly divergent outcomes in wealthy and poor communities. These developments pose a significant threat to the integrity of public education.

However I will demonstrate, the efforts of policy makers to increasingly control teachers’ work and thereby curtail their autonomy over the interpretation of curriculum, pedagogy and teaching strategies, represents the single biggest push to neoliberalize public education.¹¹ If teachers can be replaced with instructors requiring minimal training and salary, then the

¹¹ Education geographers also argue that charter schools and other direct forms of privatization in the US have the most significant social impact by facilitating racialized gentrification. Students and their families are pushed out of their neighbourhood when their local public school is closed and the new charter school will not accept them, as in New York, Chicago and New Orleans, among other cities (Brogan 2013; Lipman 2011; Huff 2013; Buras 2013).

institution of schooling will be far more malleable for political elites to expand privatization.¹² If in doing so, teachers' unions are significantly weakened or broken, then perhaps the single largest sector of the North American labour movement would be defeated, with both politically and economically profound consequences (Brogan 2013). For these reasons, this dissertation seeks to understand the neoliberalization of public education in North America by analyzing the struggle over spaces of labour autonomy and power from the classroom to the policy arena.

2.6: Teachers' Professional Autonomy

At the core of this dissertation as it relates to the work of teachers, I argue that the education of students is best served by professionally prepared teachers with substantial autonomy to meet their unique needs. In the face of the aforementioned neoliberal reforms whose motivation often comes from considerations outside the classroom or the field of education (Ginsburg 1991a), professional autonomy is vital to preventing the disempowerment and deskilling of teachers. A concise, though not exhaustive definition of teachers' professional judgement, a key element of the concept of professional autonomy, is provided by the Ontario Ministry of Education's *Growing Success*, an official document intended to guide how teachers assess and evaluate student's work:

Judgement that is informed by professional knowledge of curriculum expectations, context, evidence of learning, methods of instruction and assessment, and the criteria and standards that indicate success in student learning. In professional practice, judgement involves a purposeful and systematic thinking process that evolves in terms of accuracy and insight with ongoing reflection and self-correction. (Ontario Ministry of Education 2010: 152)

¹² The experiences of the for-profit Rocket charter school chain in California and the online K12, Inc., suggests that high turnover, low wage educators are essential for publicly funded, tuition-free schools to generate significant profits (Conniff 2014).

Concerned by member reports of school administrators unilaterally ordering changes to student grades or dictating preparation methods for standardized exams, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation (OSSTF) distributed a brochure to its members in 2016 defining professional judgement. In addition to the above quote, there is a “not exhaustive” list of examples of exercising professional judgement, that includes (among other points):

- choosing the order and emphasis of specific expectations when delivering the curriculum
- identifying the instructional strategies to deliver the curriculum
- determining the format and content of your lesson plans
- selecting methods for differentiating instruction and assessments for students
- deciding what resources are used to support the curriculum and outcomes and whether or not to use ministry approved textbooks
- choosing the frequency, timing, methods and types of assessment and evaluation used to measure student learning (OSSTF 2015)

The brochure was introduced in the monthly union newspaper in an article titled “Professionalism = Autonomy” (OSSTF 2016).

A wave of one day province wide walkouts and longer local strikes by teachers across Ontario from late 1973 to early 1974 (discussed in detail below), “admitted the secondary school teachers very substantially into areas of school policy and management hitherto considered the exclusive preserve of the board, its officials, and the school principals.” (Hennessy 1975: 5) The 1974 contract signed by the Windsor district of OSSTF won a key precedent of workplace control by mandating school board and school level staffing committees evenly comprised of OSSTF and administrative representatives that would jointly determine class assignments and ensure seniority provisions were followed in case of layoffs (Hennessy 1975: 23).

Workplace power relations are a critical factor determining the professional autonomy of teachers. As such, a focus is placed on how contemporary neoliberal reforms in all three cities

have changed the way that teachers and school administrators work with each other. In reviewing the literature of many policy advocates and academics¹³, I use the cynical phrase, ‘the principal as protagonist’ to describe the tendency to view administrators as the primary resource for educational expertise, and as those on the frontline implementing reforms who need to be liberated from contractual restrictions in order to effectively manage teachers. Crucially different in Mexico from the United States and Ontario after 1998, school directors remain part of the National Union of Education Workers (SNTE), blunting a division between employees and management.¹⁴ As a result, historically school directors in Mexico have intervened less to regulate teachers’ work, though as will be discussed in the Mexico City case study this is changing with the onset of new forms of standardized evaluation for students and teachers.

In Mexico, poverty and state repression, traditions of collective action including peasant and Indigenous organizing, and strong socialist currents among teachers, have frequently led educators to socially and politically identify closely with the communities in which they live and work, especially in rural regions. As employees of the national government, they remain beholden to its curricular policy, which can clash with the priorities of local communities, as with instruction in regional Indigenous languages. Similar tensions pitting obligations to the state against the demands of local communities have existed for Canadian and US teachers. These forces shape the extent of teachers’ professional autonomy. The James Keegstra case of an Albertan teacher who fought his dismissal to the Supreme Court of Canada for expounding anti-

¹³ See many of the contributors in Ravitch & Viteritti (2000) and Manna & McGuinn (2013).

¹⁴ However, numerous other issues exist, particularly the tradition of awarding school directorships as a form of patronage to teachers loyal to the official SNTE leadership and local bosses of the ruling political party.

Semitism in his classroom in the 1980s serves as an infamous reminder of why some limits are justified to professional autonomy.

Teacher claims to professional autonomy have sometimes exacerbated divisions between them and the communities they serve. Ginsburg argues that pursuing professional status and placing their practice above popular critique can isolate teachers from parents and other workers, making them vulnerable in times of struggle. Reflecting on England in the mid-1980s when the Thatcher government succeeded in weakening the power of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) to negotiate the salaries and working conditions of its members, he says:

More often historically teachers had pursued a strategy of professionalization, an occupational group project involving negotiations with the state for remuneration, status, and power as well as distancing of “professional” educators from the “nonprofessional” or lay community, including parents. As teachers’ past strategy of professionalization was undermined by recent efforts by state elites to proletarianize the work of teachers and teachers responded with militant “trade union” action, parents often became further alienated from teachers. Thus the possibility of an alliance between teachers and parents became more remote. (Ginsburg 1991b: 385)

Conflict between the NUT and Thatcher coincided with the more famous miner’s strike of 1984-85, yet Ginsburg observes that few connections were made between the two, due at least in part to differences in ideology and strategy, derived from a conceptualization of the former as professionals aloof from the blue collar labour movement epitomized by the miners. He concludes, “Educators seeking to forge an occupational group strategy in isolation of other social groups may succeed for a while in their struggle with economic and state elites but perhaps only as long as the educators are perceived to be serving the elites’ interests.” (Ginsburg 1991b: 385).

In 1968, less than a decade after its founding, New York City’s United Federation of Teachers embroiled itself in a series of ugly, racially divisive citywide strikes against an

experimental ‘community-controlled’ school district in the predominantly African American Ocean Hill/Brownsville neighbourhoods of Brooklyn. Led by Black power activists, the district demanded the right to circumvent disciplinary due process rights and seniority to forcibly transfer (and later fire) teachers deemed to be poorly serving African American students, and hire preferable replacements. The strikes dragged on, cumulatively, for months. They acquired a strong racial dimension of black parents and students versus overwhelmingly white (mostly Jewish) teachers, rupturing any previous relationship the union had with black community organizations in the city, and alienating many of its small minority of African American members.¹⁵ Murphy (1992), Robertson (2000) and Weiner (2012) argue that the UFT under the leadership of Al Shanker bore considerable responsibility for the conflict. While flexing its power to solidify the professional rights of its members, the union had neglected the needs and concerns of the most marginalized, racialized communities that they served. The conflict had profound political ramifications. Murphy (1992) and New York labour historian Joshua Freeman (2000) argue it contributed to the breakup of the broader US civil rights movement and killed the idealism of the 1960s public sector union movement. Freeman concludes:

Keeping the city in chaos for half a year, the walkout rent the civic body, creating wounds that remained raw decades later. Nationally, the conflict marked a turning point in the history of the civil rights movement, liberalism, and black-Jewish relations. Locally, it cast a pall of ill-humour and distrust over social and political relations. Working-class New York was never the same thereafter. (Freeman 2000: 215)

¹⁵ The 1971 strike by the Newark Teachers Union to eliminate ‘unprofessional duties’ including hall and lunchroom supervision, while driven by a desire to ensure its members had guaranteed breaks, developed a similarly racially divisive dynamic. Without the groundwork to build community alliances and incorporate the demands of predominantly African American parents who already struggled with the inadequacies and inequities of the school system, the narrowly conceived contract fight was perceived and portrayed as a strike by relatively privileged, majority white teachers against struggling black families (Golin 2002; Weiner 2012).

In comparison Chicago had a much higher proportion of black teachers and administrators. The union more easily and directly interacted with black community activists, resulting in less adversarial relations. The Chicago union supported demands for community control in exchange for support for their own collective bargaining campaigns. A convergence of interests was made in fighting school closings and mass teacher layoffs from proposed budget cuts (Murphy 1992: 247-248).¹⁶ While professional autonomy is crucial to teachers' work, with the socially vital role of educators particularly in marginalized communities, the narrow pursuit of occupational interests has significant limits.

Particularly in the US, struggles over teachers' professional autonomy continue to be racialized. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, NYC charter schools, particularly the Success Academy chain led by the high profile Eva Moskowitz, have widely touted a highly scripted model of teaching. She argues that a relentless focus on drills, rote learning and strict discipline is necessary for their black and Latino pupils from predominantly low income families to excel, as measured on the basis of their standardized test results. Conversely, allowing teachers to interpret the specific needs of their students and using more open-ended forms of instruction, is associated with perpetuating the existing dismal results for poor, racialized children. The significance of socio-economic context in educational inequity is dismissed by Moskowitz and others as tantamount to harbouring low academic expectations. One of the greatest challenges of New York State's parent-led standardized testing Opt Out movement, whose success is described in Chapter 5, is to build alliances with working class racialized parents. Then Secretary of

¹⁶ The New York Teachers Union, while lacking the formal collective bargaining rights of its successor, succeeded in many of its campaigns in blending the desire of its members for better working conditions with the needs of students and their families for better learning conditions. The Teachers Union operated from 1916 until its destruction during Cold War purges of public employees associated with the Communist Party (Taylor 2011).

Education Arne Duncan dismissed the movement in 2014 as “white suburban moms who—all of a sudden—their child isn’t as brilliant as they thought they were, and their school isn’t quite as good as they thought.” (Rethinking Schools 2014). In Chicago, activists in the predominantly African American South Side have linked the usage of standardized test scores that label their schools as failures, to a drive to racially gentrify their neighbourhoods by replacing these schools with charters that can exclude local students from enrolment (Rethinking Schools 2014). This work is ongoing in NYC, where members of the Movement of Rank and File Educators caucus within the UFT have led public campaigns to increase the number of funded sports and extracurricular activities offered in the small high schools which replaced large institutions in Latino and black communities in Harlem, the South Bronx and central-eastern Brooklyn. In doing so, they confront the argument of many neoliberal advocates that the well-being of students is primarily measured by test scores, and reassert the role of teachers as activists for the interests of their students.

Robertson cites Marxist political economist Harry Braverman who studied tendencies in capitalism towards the deskilling of labour, in describing a grim vision of emerging neoliberalized categories of teachers. They are differentiated from a once universal ‘service teacher’, the conventional full time, permanent career teacher and union member, in terms of job security and work autonomy. The ‘teacher bricoleur’: teacher managers and entrepreneurs are free floating consultants paid on temporary contracts according to performance, rather than collective agreements. They earn bonuses and retain some professional autonomy through churning up new forms of education ‘innovation’ and while supervising other teachers. At the bottom are temporary teachers. Epitomizing the new precariat, they are unable to market

themselves like the bricoleur, and so float between short-term jobs without security or professional autonomy (Robertson 2000: 209-210). Robertson poetically describes their precariousness:

The temporary teacher is dependent largely on personal networks, becoming friendly with and getting along with key personnel in the school's administration. A change of personnel can result in the need to renegotiate the social relationships and social arrangements again. Managing this network requires a different set of skills: deference, a sense of being able to manage even the toughest class, of being on top of it, and always available. 'Filling in' is both a way of operating in the world and of understanding the world; it is like marking time and being marked by time. (2000: 211)

These conditions are the reality in all three cities for many, particularly new teachers without permanent status. To a greater extent this is deliberate in New York and Mexico, whereas in Ontario it is the result of a combination of declining student enrolment and budget cuts.

Education professor and former school administrator Larry Cuban takes a stance distinct from the more direct critics of neoliberal education policy cited here. He alternately critiques or supports various aspects of what he describes as the 'dominant reform agenda' since the early 1980s in the US. Cuban eschews the term 'corporate reform movement', arguing that it implies more unity of motivation and strategy among its participants than really exists. He does not utilize the concept of neoliberalization to describe the shift in education politics either, though he notes the increasing shift towards market-style models and discourses in education alongside other public institutions. However he demonstrates (2013) that despite various waves of top down reforms in recent decades such as mandating new curriculum guidelines, pedagogical practices or technology, what teachers do in their classrooms has not changed radically. In this sense, Cuban is arguing that a greater degree of resilience exists among teachers in determining how they work in the face of externally imposed policies than is typically acknowledged by the

advocates of these policies or their opponents. He explains in an earlier book based on similar studies of teachers' work:

[T]eachers use (and have used) their limited discretion in classrooms to construct practical blends of teaching traditions to manage efficiently 25 or more students while addressing the abiding expectations of a community with long-standing beliefs about what schools ought to do. In addition, they teach content and skills tailored to both shifting currents in the larger society and their sense of what will work best with the students they see daily -regardless of what policy makers and administrators cajole or demand from teachers. Most top-down policies ignore this slender autonomy that teachers possess and use. (Cuban 2009: 63)

Cuban does argue that some recent policies like student standardized testing and its linkage to teacher evaluations through Value Added Metrics (discussed in Chapter 5 for their use in New York), have demonstrably changed teaching. For the worse, and in ways contrary to the goals claimed by their proponents, with rote learning and drills on test questions pushing aside student-centred inquiry. Cuban is significant as a high profile mainstream voice within North American education policy who argues that teaching would most likely change for the better if would-be reformers attempted to overcome their inability to see schools and the classroom from a teachers' perspective, and focused on meaningful engagement through professional development programs. I am inclined to agree with outspoken Texan school superintendent and anti-standardized testing activist John Kuhn (2014), that many advocates of neoliberal education reforms may indeed have good intentions, but that the end for most others is profit-making through privatization and weakening teachers' unions. Cuban's efforts to understand the practical effects of contemporary education policy on teachers' work are very valuable.

Particularly in Mexico and the US, in the face of a much more severe political attack than was generally the case in Canada, the national AFT, NEA and SNTE and many local leaders in

the 1990s adopted varying forms of accommodations with the neoliberal drive for ‘teacher accountability’ (Riegel 2003; Peterson 1999). These leaders and academics like Charles Kerchner and Julia Koppich argued (1997) for a turn away from militancy and the defence of contractual rights, to embrace new forms of teacher evaluation as a mark of ‘professionalism’, alongside teacher voice in school budgeting, teacher evaluation, hiring and firing decisions, implicating union members in managerial decision-making. Forms of this have been pursued by the United Federation of Teachers in New York City, as I will show in Chapter 5. I argue, following Riegel, that Canadian teachers’ unions largely avoided falling into this false dichotomy of feeling a need to choose between professional responsibility versus upholding their members’ salaries and working conditions.¹⁷ Within the time period of the case studies, some Canadian and US union locals, notably the Chicago Teachers’ Union since 2012, alongside the Mexican democratic teachers’ movement (the CNTE) demonstrate the possibilities of placing the concerns and needs of parents and students alongside teachers, and struggling for them aggressively (Brogan 2013; Weiner 2012). In the case of the CNTE, this is a tradition in which the movement is rooted, though with the necessity of continual renewal. Nevertheless, this dissertation argues that North American teachers’ unions should place more of an emphasis on defending the professional autonomy of their members from incursions by neoliberal policy. Some thoughts on overcoming the existing institutional barriers will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

¹⁷ Kerr argues that the Alberta Teachers Association embraced a similar stance to the NEA and the AFT, of so-called ‘new teacher unionism’, de-emphasizing collective bargaining for ‘professional responsibility’ (2006: 153).

2.7: Teachers' Unions & Labour

Many of the similarities and differences between US, Mexican and Canadian teachers' unions originate in the divergent histories of the labour movements of these countries, in turn shaped by distinct political and economic contexts. Among the most significant differences, the dominant teachers' organizations in Canada and US evolved over the 20th Century from associations¹⁸ primarily concerned with professional practice and with limited capacity for collective action, to full-fledged labour unions that struck over salaries and working conditions. An overview of this development and its significance for struggles over professional autonomy is provided in section 4.1. In Mexico, from the earliest local unions to the National Union of Education Workers (Sindicato Nacional de los Trabajadores de la Educación -SNTE) founded in 1943, teachers have affiliated within self-identified labour organizations. However in all three countries, labour law maintained a status for public school teachers apart from most private sector workers, either by their status as teachers or as public sector workers, which while favouring organization by making membership a statutory condition of employment, also typically came with considerable limitations on the right to strike.¹⁹

The greatest difference among teachers' unions in North America is the relative independence of US and Canadian teachers' unions from their respective governments, and the historic domination of the main Mexican teachers' organization, the SNTE, by the state (Cook 1996; Bensusan & Middlebrook 2013). These relationships reflect the divergence between the

¹⁸ The American Federation of Teachers was founded in 1916 as a labour union, but was dwarfed until the 1960s by the National Education Association.

¹⁹ Teachers are under the Education Act in Ontario rather than the provincial Labour Relations Act. They are under separate labour codes in the US and Mexico. In the latter they are legally prohibited from joining union federations with private sector workers.

freedom and subordination of unions generally in these countries. Teachers' unions in Canada and the US have been subject to legal intervention in various forms on numerous occasions, however they can still be said to represent the interests of their members. In Mexico, as will be discussed below in Chapter 4.1, the state has intervened within the SNTE, as it has in most major unions, to remove and impose leaders according to its political and economic agendas. Part of this intervention is conducted through legislation, for example the 'taking of note' (*toma de nota*) process which gives the state ultimate approval over the appointment of union officials, or the determination of the legality of proposed strikes by a tripartite board comprised of government, business and state endorsed labour representatives. In many other instances, state intervention within Mexican unions has been wholly illegal and without judicial consequences, as when police have violently attacked union conventions in the process of electing representatives considered undesirable by employers or the government (Bensusan & Middlebrook 2013). In other cases, the Mexican government has simply not intervened and refused to investigate when factions within unions commit electoral fraud or physically attack their opponents, as has occurred on innumerable occasions within the SNTE as described in Chapters 4 and 6. Finally, while teachers' unions in Canada and the US have long and complex relations with political parties and governing politicians, which on various occasions has arguably limited their autonomy (Weiner 2012), most Mexican unions including the teachers, were historically formally aligned with the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). With its predecessor parties, the PRI ruled Mexico as a de facto one-party state from the late 1920s until the late 1990s, losing the presidency only in 2000. The corporatist structures that bound most Mexican unions to the state began to break down in the late 1980s as the ruling party shifted from an authoritarian

populism based in part on the support of mass unions, to neoliberal technocracy in the context of a deep recession and preparations for the North American Free Trade Agreement (Bensusan & Middlebrook 2013).

The privatization of state enterprises in the 1980s and loss of much of the PRI's institutional power amid formal democratization in the late 1990s, contributed to the rapid decline of most PRI-aligned unions, though as will be explained in Chapter 6, not the teachers' union. Unionization in Mexico fell from around 30 percent in 1984 to less than 10 percent by 2010, though most of these numbers are comprised by company unions (Fairris & Levine 2004; de la Garza Toledo 2012). As a result of declining employment in unionized industries, offshoring facilitated by trade agreements, new non-union plants, a lack of success in organizing new service industries, vicious employer anti-unionism frequently aided by the state, and a cultural turn to conservatism, US union membership has declined steadily in the private sector since the early 1980s (Fletcher & Gapasin 2008) to 6.7 percent (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2016). It has remained relatively steady among public employees at 35.2 percent (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2016). Not subject to most of the conditions described above, public school teachers are distinguished as among the job classifications with the highest rates of unionization (Brogan 2013). Private sector union membership has also declined in Canada, but to 15.2 percent (Statistics Canada 2016). While subject to similar pressures related to globalization, Canada retains a much more favourable labour law regime amid a generally more social democratic political culture (Lipset & Meltz 2004). Meanwhile, Canada's public sector union membership has also remained stable but at 71.3 percent (Statistics Canada 2016), making universally unionized teachers stand out less.

Unionization rates vary dramatically within all three countries due to distinct regional economic structures and differences in labour law and political culture. Rates in Canada ranged from 20 percent in Alberta to 37 percent in Quebec and Newfoundland (Statistics Canada 2016). In Mexico it ranges from 26 percent in Tamaulipas to 10.6 percent in Baja California, though it is difficult to know what this really means, since many ‘union members’ are unaware of their affiliation, as the organization holds a secret ‘protection contract’ with an employer (de la Garza

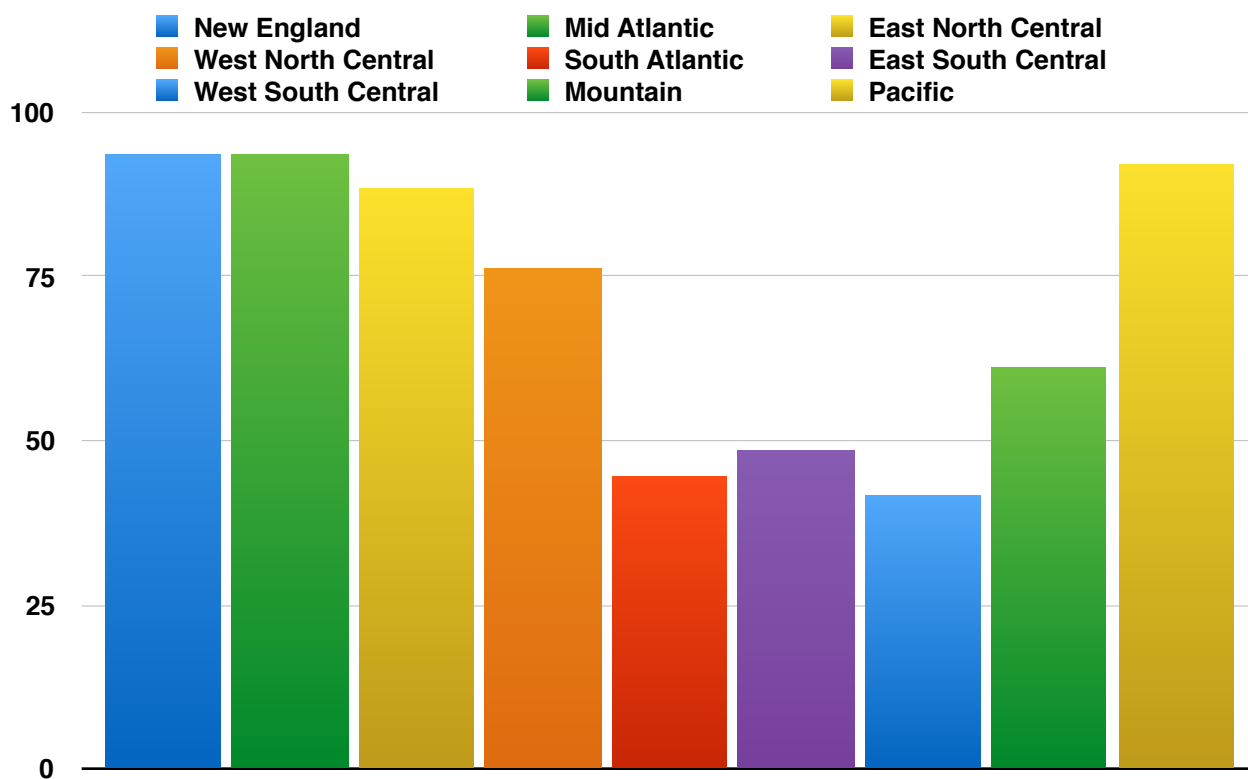


Figure 1: US Public School Teacher Unionization Rate by Region, 2010-2012

Source: Sylvia Allegretto & Ilan Tojerow (2014) "Teacher staffing and pay differences: public and private schools," *Monthly Labor Review*. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Washington DC.

Toledo 2012: 454, 468). These regional variations do not directly affect teachers in either country, who are statutory members of their respective unions. A far wider range exists in the United States, between New York State at 24.7 percent and South Carolina at 2.1 percent (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2016). A significant factor behind this range, the existence of ‘Right

to Work' legislation which makes union membership for employees of unionized workplaces optional, does apply to teachers. As a result, the proportional membership and therefore the strength of teachers' unions in the US varies dramatically between those in the socially conservative and anti-union 'right to work' south, and the rest of the country.

2.8: Towards a Labour Geography of Teacher Autonomy

This dissertation seeks to build on theoretical understandings in several areas at both the general sub-discipline level such as comparative education policy and labour geography, as well as far more specific studies on the composition of urban teachers' unions and movements. I hope to demonstrate the centrality of the conflict over the professional autonomy of teachers to the contemporary neoliberalization of education. The literature of critical policy mobility studies and labour geography is useful for understanding how both state authorities and unions use scalar strategies. The former seeks to enhance their authority and out-scale geographically defined pockets of resistance, while sometimes drawing on the resource of policies from elsewhere. The latter attempts to mitigate the spatial unevenness of its power in order to negotiate at a higher scale when appropriate to do so.

To clearly reiterate a sentiment which has guided the direction of this chapter, this study on the impact of contemporary neoliberal education policy on teachers' work is based on the argument that teachers exercise considerable agency. I say this in challenge to scholars who in their description and analyses view the neoliberalization of education as a totalizing force²⁰. I argue that this buries the real or potential agency of teachers and other actors to contest this

²⁰ I would place some works by Henry Giroux in this category.

process. Even when they conclude with a call to arms, what comes across is that the neoliberal transformation is overwhelming; if this is truly the case, what prospects exist for resistance?

While it is seldom conceived by their practitioners as of a political nature, let alone as acts of resistance, teachers' agency is exercised day to day by individual teachers determining how best to meet the needs of their unique group of students. This resilience has been identified by Cuban (2009, 2013) and other researchers on classroom practice and its persistent non-alignment with top-down education policy, in which teachers are seldom consulted substantively. The intervention of teachers' unions and organizations in the determination of the state's education policy has a higher profile. Across North America, teachers through collective action have affirmed Springer's (2012) contention that neoliberalism is not an invincible juggernaut. However the strategies of their organizations vary considerably. Despite high profile struggles in Chicago, Oaxaca or British Columbia, the case studies of this dissertation reinforce that for the most part these interventions are more typically within the set parameters of state-labour relations. Sometimes teachers' organizations intervene in ways which accommodate neoliberal reforms or advocate for them (Riegel 2003). It is also far from the case that teachers' organizations exert overwhelming power over state authorities, as anti-union critics like the US Hoover Institute's Terry Moe (2011), former Ontario Conservative leader Tim Hudak, or Mexicanos Primero have claimed. This is overwhelmingly clear from the consistent erosion of the working and employment conditions of teachers by these governments.

This dissertation begins from the premise that professional autonomy is desirable not only for the quality of teachers' working conditions, but is also essential for an education system that meets the unique needs of its students. A critique is woven throughout the high profile

studies and reports such as those cited here issued by the Brookings Institution, the World Bank and the OECD, which all too often dismiss the voices of teachers as being self-interested, despite their integral role in education. Meanwhile, senior policy advocates and business leaders are lauded as authoritative voices that are ideologically neutral or driven by altruistic concern for the needs of students. What is consistent in these neoliberal prescriptions for education are policies that reduce overall funding levels for public schools and fill the void with privatization -either through the creation of new markets or the downloading of financing onto parents. The power of teachers in their schools and in their communities is an obstacle for these policies.

I argue above that preserving the professional autonomy of teachers, which can only be done by their individual and collective agency, is so critical in the contemporary context of public education, because neoliberalization cannot substantially advance without the transformation of the labour process of educators. This is what makes the existing spaces of labour autonomy in the classroom important and worthy of study. It also suggests a certain methodology in which drawing directly on the experiences of classroom teachers is particularly key, as will be discussed in the following chapter.

This study demonstrates that scale has real, tangible meaning for social movements and workers contesting state strategies. For those concerned with the strategies and dynamics of social movements and their fates, I argue that it is more productive to study how these movements successfully or unsuccessfully interact with scale as defined by state structures and other institutions, than to argue that scale should not be used as a way to conceptualize political geography because it is a hierarchical form of thinking. Here, I argue that Marston et al (2005) and Springer's (2014) calls to forget about scale as a way of thinking prefiguratively for a more

Scales of Teachers' Labour Autonomy

Ascending Levels of Authority. More powerful groups in **bold**, institutional organizations in boxes, flows of influence shown with arrows.

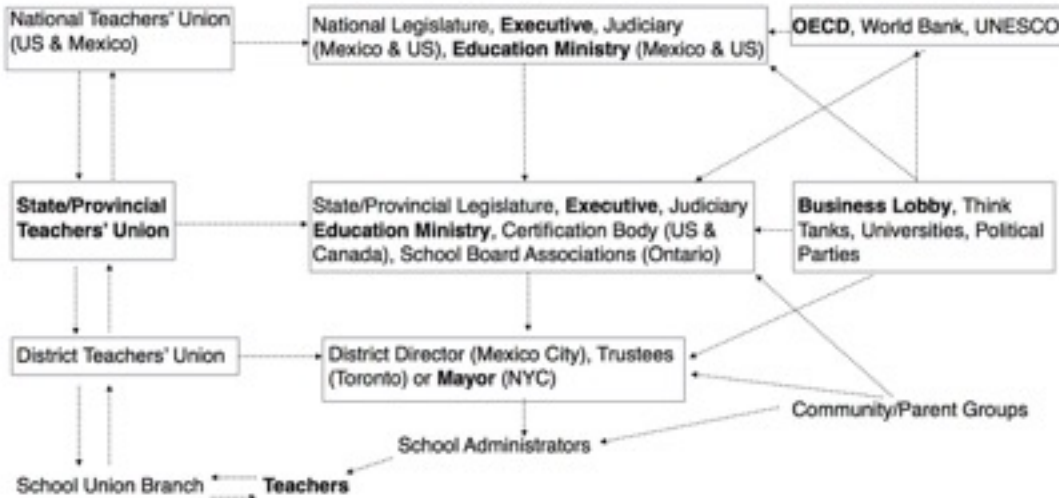


Figure 2

Paul Bocking, 2017

horizontal politics, are unhelpful for understanding movements and organizations that must confront and negotiate with the state. Likewise, understanding the politically contingent nature of the state and its strategies are important for comprehending the prospects for social movements and labour. The state is not ideologically neutral as the advocates of neoliberal policies infer (unless these governments act against their wishes). However as Nicos Poulantzas (1978), Bob Jessop (2002) and other critical social theorists have argued, capitalist states are also far from politically monolithic. Considerable space exists within the North American context for sufficiently powerful movements of teachers and their allies to challenge the dominant neoliberal governmentality and even implement alternatives.

In Figure 2, I seek to visually represent how teachers' organizations, state authorities and various policy advocates utilize scalar strategies in their efforts to shape public education in North America. It must be emphasized that this is an extremely general schema for

understanding scalar structures and flows of influence within public education across North America. For example in the extremely hierarchical official union structures of the SNTE, there are few spaces for grassroots influence on the direction of the national executive as there are through the delegate assemblies of the dissident CNTE movement or other unions like OSSTF. Likewise, in many specific local contexts in the case studies of this dissertation, teachers have made meaningful connections with parent leaders, as with standardized testing Opt Out activists associated with the MORE caucus of New York's UFT, discussed below in Chapter 5. However Figure 2 indicates that a disconnect exists in typical conditions.

Figure 2 shows the scales of institutional structures within which teachers' professional autonomy and education policy in general exists and are developed in North America. Four scales of power relations are shown here, from the classroom to the national level. While these scales depict an overall hierarchy of authority, more horizontal relations also exist, as between different levels of unions and governments, as well as spaces for bottom-up contestation as exercised by some community and parent groups. Despite the global reach of their activities, I placed powerful multilateral nongovernmental agencies like the OECD in a tier alongside national governments to illustrate how the authority of the former is contingent on the recognition and uptake by state authorities. I argue that at least within the context of Canada, the US and Mexico, these global policy developers and advocates derive their primary importance from their usage by domestic elites to validate their own policy agendas.²¹

One of the most important case study distinctions within Figure 2 is the virtual absence of a national level tier for education policy in Canada. What is more difficult to clearly depict here

²¹ An analysis gained from Panitch & Gindin (2012) and in the context of education policy, from Verger (2009).

are differences in the degree of centralization between the US and Mexico. Whereas US federal intervention in education policy alongside an increase in funding, has grown substantially since the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001 and Race to the Top in 2009, much of this national authority was relinquished to the state level with the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015. However the latter law only codified widespread state exemptions and modifications from NCLB policies that had existed in practice almost since its enactment. The federal level remains important in the US for its role as a high profile bully pulpit to set a national agenda and define the ‘common sense’ of education policy, which is subsequently articulated and rolled out to a large extent by state governments. The institution of mayoral control in New York and other big US cities represents a different scalar approach to place power in the hands of a local executive. By contrast, education policy in Mexico was steadily centralized over the 2000s, particularly with the constitutional amendments of 2012-2013 that prohibit state-level exemptions from national evaluation programs, and the uploading from states of responsibility for SEP employee salaries.²² In Ontario, the key scalar shift since the turn of the 21st Century has been the uploading of collective bargaining from school districts to the provincial level, following British Columbia and other provinces (Sweetman & Slinn 2012). In both Mexico and Canada, I argue that the primary objective appears to be to exert greater executive control over labour negotiations, though mayoral control appears to have accomplished this as well.

Teachers’ unions and movements have responded in highly divergent ways. While the CNTE coordinated nationwide waves of strikes and mobilizations against education reforms in

²² However it was accompanied by the further downloading of school operations and maintenance costs to the states, which can further pass them on to municipalities, which can decide again to shift this burden directly onto the parents of students themselves through annual fees. The government of Mexico City has taken on many of these costs (though in the case of school maintenance, arguably not yet sufficiently), ensuring that no fees are charged to parents, whereas in Guerrero and elsewhere, parents must contribute to the upkeep of the school.

2013, obtaining some limited negotiations with the Secretary of the Interior, it ultimately fell back on fighting these policies to the greatest extent within their southern regional base. The UFT struggled to exert influence over the uploading of policymaking to the governor's mansion in Albany, while community organizations led by parents, with some dissident teacher participation, effectively challenged statewide testing policies in 2015 and 2016. In Ontario, the provincial level of OSSTF has successfully fended off further incursions on professional autonomy, but many teacher unionists especially in Toronto, were frustrated by the sapping of meaningful local negotiations, as most issues were now determined at Queen's Park. Despite this overall scaling up of struggle, I argue that examining teachers' contestation of challenges to their professional autonomy at the local level is still crucial, as this is the place where educators live and work, and are most likely to construct meaningful and more broad alliances. In democratic unions (ruling out the national SNTE), a significant degree of its internal political culture is formed at this level. With the exception of the massive state-level and occasionally national mobilizations fielded by the CNTE or OSSTF and other Ontario unions at the provincial level, it is at the local level where rank and file teachers predominantly exercise their agency, above all in the schools and classrooms where they work, and where the extent of their professional autonomy is ultimately determined. So while studying the scaling up of neoliberal policy formation and its contestation, I simultaneously strive to maintain a focus on the differentiation among sites where abstraction meets lived experience.

3. Methodology

The central argument of this dissertation is that contemporary neoliberal policies in North America are undermining the professional autonomy of teachers, and that this process is highly but unevenly contested. I use three case studies to assess the impact of neoliberal policies on local school systems and the response of teachers' unions in Toronto, New York City and Mexico City. In this chapter I critically reflect on my relationship to my research, my reasons for focusing on teachers as key interview subjects and participants in my ethnographic observations, and the details of how I conducted these aspects of the study. I then address the challenges of ethics and rigour derived from my own partiality which has frequently aided me in granting me 'insider' access. I explain my use of these case studies and what I believe my choice of these three urban sites contributes, before providing an overview of my use of policy analysis and journalistic sources.

Finally, I situate this study within larger epistemological approaches. I explain how my interest in teachers as qualitative sources partially stems from a critique of how contemporary neoliberal policy advocates frequently employ a positivist rationale to exclude the voices of educators from their narrow perspective of legitimate sources. I broadly identify my approach with critical realism, especially for its acknowledgment of both the significance of both social structure and individual or collective agency, and in my efforts to draw out threads of commonality among widely divergent social contexts.

3.1: Situating the Researcher

In researching and writing this dissertation, I draw heavily on personal, professional and political experience formally external to being a graduate student of geography. Jensen and Glasmeier (2010) contend that it is important for geographers to situate themselves socially in order for their work to have a policy impact outside academia. Previous to them, Haraway (1991) developed the concept of ‘situated knowledge’, that in contrast to positivist claims to objectivity, ideas are shaped by the social context of the researcher and the relationship of the researcher with their subject of study. Here, I attempt to ‘situate’ myself in relation to my research on teachers’ work and education policy.

My mother is a career high school teacher, the head of her Modern Languages department, and a proud union member. To a great degree inspired by her, I taught full time for four years in several high schools in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) prior to entering doctoral studies. In a context of declining student enrolment and reduced provincial government funding, I was unable to obtain a permanent position, working back to back year-long contracts covering for absent teachers. I taught a broad range of courses in the social science and humanities, usually with ‘difficult’ classes in predominantly working class and racialized schools. A placement in an ‘academic’ school, located in an affluent west Toronto neighbourhood was an eye opening experience for me. Seeing firsthand how the nature of teaching is fundamentally shaped by the context in which we work, influencing the sources of stress, usage of time and pedagogy we employ, where possible in my field work (especially in Toronto) my interview recruitment strategy reflected this reality.

During this time I was elected to the local union executive representing short and long term substitute secondary teachers, the Occasional Teachers Bargaining Unit (OTBU), and have participated in a number of local and provincial-level union committees, serving on the negotiations table team in 2015. Through these experiences I am well positioned to understand some of the contemporary realities of teaching within a Canadian context, and the institutional responses of teachers' unions to the challenges addressed by this dissertation. Along with advantages in terms of institutional access and an intuitive understanding of the processes of teachers' work, my personal, professional and political involvement with public school teaching and unions yields significant ethical questions for academic research. I have attempted to address this with an extended explanation of my background, which I continue below under subsection 3.3, the "Challenges of rigorous but not disinterested research."

I also benefit from strong connections with teachers and education activists in Mexico originating well before I formally began my field work for this dissertation. Beginning with a yearlong undergraduate study abroad program in 2005-2006 at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) in the capital, I have travelled extensively in Mexico, visiting friends and making contacts for the past decade, becoming fluent in Spanish. Many of these connections were facilitated by my involvement since 2010 with the Trinational Coalition in Defence of Public Education, led by Maria de la Luz Arriaga Lemus, professor of economics and education finance at the UNAM and participation in its frequent conferences in Mexico City, usually co-organized with the dissident Mexican teachers' movement, and networks of post-secondary academics. In 2012, I produced and directed a micro budget feature-length documentary film, *2 Revolución: Free Trade, Mexico and North America*, focusing on the

privatization of public education and other impacts of neoliberal policies in Mexico. I screened it for audiences of teachers and labour activists from the cities of Matamoros on the US border, to Cuernavaca, south of Mexico City. I have written for OSSTF publications on conflicts over public education in Mexico and the United States, and represented my union at various conferences organized by the CNTE. My prior experience with US teacher activists was much more limited, mainly meetings at biennial Labour Notes conferences in Chicago. My York University geography colleague Peter Brogan, whose dissertation focused on teachers in New York and Chicago, was instrumental in making initial introductions here, as was New Jersey City University professor of education Lois Weiner.

In support of my scholarly work I am drawing then on experiences and identities that are beyond the strictly academic. I identify this approach with *phronesis*, which as applied by Basu (2009) who citing Flyvbjerg, emphasizes “practical wisdom, practical judgment, common sense and prudence” (quoted in Basu 2009: 481). This concept was useful in Basu’s research on neoliberal education policy as a theoretical framework addressing practical challenges of data collection in which contemporary state authorities are frequently reluctant to provide access to key information. She argues then that documenting and analyzing the challenges created by these gatekeepers in order to understand the power relations that are embedded in these practices is in fact part of the research process, as is describing the utilization of unconventional strategies to circumvent them, as a means of assisting future scholars in the field (Basu 2009: 481-482). I have attempted to do so below in discussion of my access to three case study sites.

3.2: Participatory Ethnography: A Focus on Listening to and Talking with Teachers

The key questions of this dissertation on how teachers' work and professional autonomy have been transformed by contemporary neoliberal policy, necessitates prioritizing research among those directly affected, the educators. In doing so I am seeking to remedy the absence of classroom teacher voices in much of qualitative education policy research. I argue that this short coming can often be associated with an ideological orientation that sees teachers categorically as a key part of problems facing education, as with Brun's report on Latin American and Caribbean teachers for the World Bank (2014), Viteritti's edited collections on US schools (2000, 2009) and most publications from the Brookings Institution. Teachers are seen as interested parties who must be acted upon, as the objects rather than the subjects of education policy (Rezai-Rashti 2009: 307). Sometimes as with People for Education's annual survey of Ontario schools or in Pinto's (2015) research on the province's education policy, principals are taken up instead where a 'ground level' perspective is needed. Alternately, the format of the research itself precludes the inclusion of teacher voices, as with the annual *Education at a Glance* (568 pages long in 2015) comparative study of national education statistics compiled by the OECD. Influenced by my background as a teacher, and as a graduate of a labour studies program that emphasized social research in which workers are given a voice, I have strived to remedy this deficit of teachers talking about their own work. I used a combination of formal semi-structured recorded interviews from 40 to 90 minutes in length which following Cresswell (2013), utilized phenomenological questioning on how policies impacted their experiences and the contexts in which this occurred, and ethnographic study by participating in teachers' organizations and working alongside other educators. During the course of my field work, I was able to identify

and solidify my understanding of what became the five common dynamics²³ of the neoliberalization of teachers' work through their de-professionalization, that I consider across my three case studies. I benefited in this way from what McDowell (2010) describes as the importance of flexibility and allowing the focus of one's research to evolve through interviews. Concurring with her argument for the importance of analyzing the context and dynamics of interviews and of field research more broadly, I describe the basis of my work at the three case study sites below.

For my Toronto case study, I decided to focus my qualitative research around interviews with English teachers in two high schools, whose widely divergent student demographics attempts to capture my first hand observation as a teacher that working in a school whose students are predominantly from poor and working class families makes the job fundamentally different than the experience of teaching children from affluent families. These interviews were conducted between August 2014 and July 2015. One school is located in an affluent, predominantly white Anglo west end neighbourhood. The other is in Scarborough, one of Toronto's 'inner suburbs' populated by young first generation families from south Asia and east Africa, as well as seniors of south European descent. I have taught from six months to a year in the English departments at both of these schools. I was able to recruit former colleagues to participate in interviews representing a fairly representative cross section of years of teaching experience, participation in school activities (including department leaders²⁴), age, gender, political views and union involvement. All eight of the teachers interviewed at these two schools

²³ Identified in the preceding chapter in the 'Neoliberal Education Policy' subsection.

²⁴ Referred to in Ontario as Curriculum Leaders and Assistant Curriculum Leaders.

were white, which unfortunately is fairly close to being representative of their departments which were 80-90% white. The teaching staff of their schools were perhaps 70-80% white in 2014-2015, in line with demographics across the Toronto District School Board (which is attended by a majority of students of colour). It was a priority for me to recruit a cross section of participants who would represent the 'average' sentiment of teachers in regards to how their work has changed over the course of their careers, and how they conceive of teacher-principal power relations, the role of the union, and the impact of standardized testing and curriculum changes on their work, among other issues. In addition to these representative participants, I interviewed self-identified union activists and elected OSSTF leaders at the local and the provincial level. I also spoke with academics and leading policy activists in the Ontario education sector. Unfortunately I did not have success arranging meetings with officials from the provincial Ministry of Education or the Toronto District School Board.

My interviews in Mexico were more extensive, in part to compensate for less initial familiarity. In November 2013, I participated in an international conference in Mexico City of teachers and union leaders from Canada, the US and Mexico. With the help of several secondary school teachers in the audience from Mexico City, I later made a presentation on my proposed research to around 20 local secondary teachers, from which I obtained contact information and offers of introductions to school principals. These initial contacts were thus made based on my legitimacy established by speaking at the conference, and being introduced by others as a known union activist and teacher and therefore as somebody likely to be sympathetic to their struggles. My position as a graduate student of geography was of secondary importance. From here, I ultimately worked with two teachers who facilitated my visits to their two schools on multiple

occasions in May to June 2015 and February 2016, to interview in Spanish a sample of their colleagues who were diverse in terms of experience, subject area, age, gender, school involvement and political views. I also interviewed administrators and principals at both schools, and at one, the official SNTE school representative.

Crucial in selecting these two schools was the relative comfort of my hosts for bringing me into the building to meet their colleagues and principals. In Toronto, I was able to arrange most of my interviews outside of schools because of prior contacts and the relative ease of commuting around the city. In Mexico City, most of these interviews occurred on the school site; in the staff room during a break, or in a classroom at the end of the day. As a result, by necessity these were schools with friendly principals willing to cooperate with a visiting foreign researcher, and with whom the teachers of their schools generally enjoyed relatively good relations. This is an important limitation of my study in Mexico City. I chose not to pursue official endorsement, support or assistance from a higher level of education authorities, due to the suspicion in which I knew they were held by many teachers.²⁵

In these visits I was also able to observe the ambience of both their overall conditions of teaching, and specifically the ways in which they interacted with each other, and what was said between colleagues in the staff room or the corridor. I was frequently invited into classrooms to speak to students and participate in lessons. Following Kearns (2004), I saw these informal observations as an important, often nonverbal supplement of information to my interviews. I would write my observations into my notebook in the evening on the bus and Metro rides back to

²⁵ In February 2016, while chatting informally with a newer teacher in the staff room of her school regarding her opinions on the national teacher exam, a colleague of hers walked in and sat at a nearby table with his lunch, making a face in my direction. “Don’t worry, he’s not with the INEE [the state evaluation agency].” she laughed, pointing at me. “You’re not though, right?” she quickly added. My answer sufficiently reassured her and her colleague, that he joined our table and shared his packet of cookies.

my apartment. Though not coming close to my years in Toronto high school classrooms, I wanted to gain a first-hand idea of what it was like to teach in a Mexico City secondary school. In my initial visits, I relied heavily on my hosts to introduce me to people. My hosts were well known by their colleagues as prominent activists with the CNTE. While it's possible this association could have coloured the responses of my interviewees, I do not believe it was a significant factor because these formal interviews were conducted privately one on one and because I emphasized my credentials as a politically independent researcher. Compared to the power imbalance of the employer/employee relationship particularly in Mexico's highly conflictual context, being associated with a labour activist created far less of an obstacle, and was helpful insofar as teachers knew I was not associated with the authorities.

Both of these schools were located in the massive borough of Iztapalapa in southeastern Mexico City, with over 2 million residents, the largest of the city's 16 delegations. Predominantly working class, the neighbourhoods in which these two schools are located are representative of this urban region, much of it built informally by rural migrants during the city's population explosion from the 1950s through the 1970s. Unlike in Toronto, I decided to base my interviews in two schools serving demographically similar communities. While it would not be as useful in distinguishing the differences of teaching in an affluent versus a working class school, it recognized that the latter represented the characteristics of the vast majority of the city's schools, in comparison to Toronto's far larger middle and upper classes as a proportion of the population. By controlling for socio-economic status, it would also help me to identify other causes for divergent experiences of teachers in these schools.

Like in Toronto, I also interviewed a selection of activists, in the case of Mexico City, active CNTE members and elected officers, who were invaluable for providing explanations of the development of the movement over the past twenty years since the publication of Maria Lorena Cook's key study (Cook 1996). I especially wanted to understand the context of the movement in the city, as so much journalistic and activist coverage focuses on more visible CNTE contingents in Oaxaca, Michoacan and Guerrero. I always asked them to explain why the movement in the capital had seldom reached the strength of these predominantly rural states. In addition, I benefited from substantial interviews from several of Mexico's most engaged academics on labour and education policy. Mexican education policy makers were far more receptive to meeting with me than their equivalents in Toronto or New York. I was able to meet and interview senior officials of both the Mexico City SEP and the national administration, from whom I gained some valuable insights into how their government interacted with multilateral agencies like the OECD and UNESCO. Unfortunately, I was unable to obtain a response from the official leaders of sections 9 and 10 of the Mexico City SNTE, its national office or its research centre, the Institute for Education and Union Studies of the Americas.²⁶

Lacking long standing prior connections, my field research was the weakest in New York City. The initial assistance of my PhD colleague Peter Brogan was invaluable for introducing me to several politically active teachers he had interviewed as part of his research. I then employed a snow ball approach, interviewing these teachers and obtaining further contacts for subsequent interviews. I also separately contacted several teachers I became aware of through their online

²⁶ Instituto de Estudios Educativos y Sindicales de América -IEESA, which while a branch of the SNTE, regularly issues far more critical reports and commentaries on the government's education policy. See for example, IEESA (2013). *Algunas Consideraciones del Pasado Reciente del Sindicalismo Docente Latinoamericano*. ['Some considerations on the recent past of Latin American teacher unionism']. Downloadable at www.ieesa.org.mx

blogs and essays on their experiences in New York's school system. My teacher interview base in New York was therefore skewed towards the politically active, specifically those involved in the Movement of Rank and File Educators (MORE), a dissident left caucus within the UFT. Despite this limitation, I benefited from articulate, highly critical perspectives on the experience of education under mayors Bloomberg and De Blasio, and Governor Cuomo. These teachers worked in a diverse range of subject areas, responsibilities (a couple were department leaders), representative of age and gender, years of experience, employment status and union involvement (a few led their school's union chapters). Like in Toronto, they were predominantly white. They tended to teach in struggling inner city schools, but with a fairly even dispersal across the city, though a disproportionate number taught in alternative schools with some exemptions from the state's standardized student evaluations. The interviews were conducted during visits in December 2014, January and April 2015, with follow up conversations later that year in October. Most were conducted in coffee shops, two were done in the schools where they worked. Many participants did not have positive relationships with their principals.

With my relatively short stays in the city, it was not possible to conduct extensive observations in the schools themselves. I did receive formal recognition from the NYC Department of Education's Institutional Review Board, but this did not assist me in obtaining responses to interview requests from any central office administrators. Noting my colleague Brogan's difficulties in receiving any response from the offices of the UFT, I sent multiple letters and emails, including a letter of introduction from the president of OSSTF, to no avail. Social networks ultimately connected me to two former union officials. Where I lacked access to institutional settings, I was able to engage in a limited ethnographic study of the organizing of

the MORE caucus, by attending a number of their meetings, conferences, socials, and a rally at the state capitol in Albany in January 2015. Attending a major international conference of union activists in Chicago organized by Labor Notes in April 2016 was particularly valuable. The event included hundreds of teachers from Canada, Mexico and the US, many of the latter with the United Caucus of Rank and File Educators, which has emerged as a significant network for dissidents in AFT and NEA affiliated unions. Sessions provided an international analysis of common policies like standardized testing. I will discuss my observations from this significant event of grassroots policy mobility in Chapter 4.

While doing my field work, I gained insights both from intensive hour long interviews and while carrying a note pad, observing meetings and in casual ‘off the record’ conversations. I frequently found that respondents were more willing to make a controversial point in this manner, usually when I had returned months after conducting a formal recorded interview. I followed up with the more intensive interview participants concerning the status of my research, out of a belief that these individuals should share in some of the results of the work to which they contributed (Kearns 2004). Maintaining these connections over time was a challenge, for which the easy ‘check-ins’ facilitated by social media was indispensable. Occasionally reading through the news feeds of several informants active on Facebook has been helpful for rapidly informing myself of key events in education politics in their cities and finding relevant reposted articles and essays. I identify with the experience of Harnng Luh Sin (2015) who considered how his extensive use of Facebook to communicate with his informants blurred the lines of when he was and was not in the field, as well as raising new issues around confidentiality, such as the appropriateness of publicly sharing content on media profiles which implicates your social relationship, and of

‘partiality’. I grappled with these questions, but the reward was the development of stronger connections and linkages of trust than would otherwise be possible, and on which so much of the research behind this dissertation depended.

3.3: Challenges of ‘Rigorous but not Disinterested’ Scholarship

Following Berg and Mansvelt (2004) and taking a post positivist stance, I am stepping forward from the impersonal third person perspective here to be clear about how my research has been shaped by my world view. It should be evident by this point, that I make no claims to political neutrality. I have tremendous faith in and loyalty to teachers and the teaching profession, and I am ardently opposed to what I have described above as the neoliberalization of education. I believe that students are best served by teachers free to exercise their full professional experience and training, alongside democratic community engagement and the equitable allocation of resources to mitigate the effects of a socio-economically unequal society. I am an active and proud trade unionist. For me this precipitates a sincere critical approach to analyzing the shortcomings of labour’s leadership and organizations, from the perspective of someone who wants them to do far better in serving the interests of and emancipating working people and the oppressed. A critical, honest approach to my research is for me the essential core of academic integrity, which I hope I have maintained throughout this dissertation.

I draw inspiration from Rosemary Hennessy’s phrase, ‘rigorous but not disinterested scholarship’, which she used to describe her study of the sexual politics of queer organizers in the Maquiladora factory districts (2013). Hennessy’s ethnographic research made her a witness to crowded meetings of women workers in small living rooms, and spirited protest camps of

fired activists outside the gates of windswept, sterile industrial parks. Some of whom confided their personal stories to her, on the basis of trust in a woman who was in solidarity with their struggles and their lives. A key challenge emerges in balancing one's sense of loyalty of and solidarity for a movement or group, with the necessity of maintaining one's academic integrity—especially when it is necessary to make a critique. I grappled with this while analyzing the union of which I am an active part, OSSTF. Perhaps it was more challenging in relation to the Mexican teachers' movement, given the far greater stakes in which their struggle unfolds. I do believe that all academic work which attempts to influence policy and intervene in politics is highly subjective and thus with inherent biases, following McDowell (2010), Jensen and Glasmeier (2010) and the feminist adage, 'the personal is political'. I have made mine clear.

It is likely impossible to verify, but taking a clear political stance on the issues at the core of this dissertation may have cost me opportunities to meet and interview those who oppose my views. These are the consequences of doing critical social research. My political views are easy to triangulate from an internet search.²⁷ On the other hand, by conveying a stance of being pro-teacher and pro-union, I built trust with individuals I would not have likely reached to a great degree if I portrayed myself as an impartial academic. Along with establishing a basis of trust in the context of the hierarchical worker-boss power relations of the workplace, I may not have been considered worth the time of my informants to accompany to a colleague's school on their day off, or to shuttle around to talk with teachers on their breaks between classes amidst the chaos and cacophony of hundreds of adolescents. Or to confide their critique of their principal or

²⁷ I had a unique opportunity to confirm this after writing my Masters thesis. A freedom of information request by a human rights NGO released an email transcript where Canadian embassy staff in Mexico recommended that the CEO of a mining company not contact me due to my published critical stance on the activities of his company.

their school's union representative, if it wasn't in the service of a project that strives to assist in creating a better public education system and better working conditions for teachers. I believe I have gained more than I have lost.

3.4: Using and Choosing Case Studies

I focused on the city scale of union organization to conduct my intensive case study research as I believe that despite uneven degrees of regional-federal centralization across the three national contexts²⁸, this scale is still the most critical for determining the results of collective bargaining. This is so through the intersection of the union local's capacities and political culture, with the resources and political direction of both the municipal school board and varying levels of senior government in each country. Further, I believe that the city-level local is optimal for studying the political culture of each union, as this is the scale at which rank and file education workers are most likely to engage meaningfully with their union. As Herbert (2010) contends, for qualitative geographers, using locally situated case studies enables us to add depth to our research by understanding the context of a specific place. From here, we can assess whether our case study confirms broader trends and dynamics on the bases of comparability (with the five dynamics of de-professionalization I introduced in Chapter 2.5), or is in fact an aberration, opening up further discussion. I gained an understanding of these cultures and institutional histories through field work within a political entity defined around these cities.

²⁸ Ranging from a very strong influence by the Mexican Secretary of Public Education, the employer of all public primary and secondary teachers in Mexico and determining the education policies of Mexico City, to the New York City Department of Education which sets its terms for negotiating with the UFT, though influenced by state and federal policies. The Toronto District School Board lies in-between, as the signatory to the collective agreements of Toronto teachers, though its role has diminished with the assumption of negotiations over monetary issues since 2009 by the Ontario Ministry of Education and the provincial unions.

Where field work allowed, within these cities I focused on specific schools, as I believe that the greatest contributor to the political culture of a larger union local are the interpersonal relationships at the worksites between members, and between members and their immediate supervisors. I found that teacher sentiment and responses towards the policies which confronted them were significantly determined through discussions with their colleagues. While the classroom is ultimately where teachers' professional autonomy is practiced or suppressed, I orient my case studies at the city level because while the individual practices of teachers matter, ultimately what I am studying here are collective phenomena of protest and acquiescence.

As the populations of the three cities varies widely, so do their teachers' union membership²⁹. In 2016, approximately 22 000 teachers (including substitutes) were employed by the Toronto District School Board, affiliated to two unions, the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation.³⁰ New York City's United Federation of Teachers identifies 150 000 members including retirees and workers at non-education employers. The New York City Department of Education reports 77 000 active teachers. In Mexico, the key sub national unit of organization in the education system is at the state level, which is paralleled by the National Union of Education Workers (SNTE)'s structure of local union sections. As the nation's capital, Mexico City has a special administrative status and its own education authority. It was titled the Federal District until 2016, when it achieved the full status of a state and is known since as simply Mexico City. The SNTE has three Mexico City

²⁹ Publicly employed K-12 teachers are automatically members of their unions in all three case studies because of contractual labour rights, and in Ontario, statutory membership in a teachers' federation.

³⁰ An additional 6 000 unionized teachers are employed by the publicly funded Toronto Catholic school board. They are largely excluded from this study as they work under a separate local employer.

sections, representing elementary and secondary teachers (Sections 9 and 10), and support staff (Section 11), totalling nearly 200 000 members. I focus on the teacher locals.

These three cities, the most important urban centre of each country, have been chosen as they are the highest profile sites for the implementation of education policy, and as a result, provide a litmus test for the subsequent rollout of policy elsewhere within each country, as well as transnationally.³¹ Each location also features the closest proximity to elite policy makers of any local school authority in these countries (along with Washington, DC). These are also sites with histories of union and dissident teacher organizing (Cook 1996; Taylor 2011; Sweeney 2013), in cities with rich popular left traditions. Since the 2008 recession, teachers' unions in each country have fought high profile battles. The character of these struggles grew beyond contesting specific government policies associated with austerity, curtailing union rights or de-professionalization, to take on a larger public ideological significance of defending education as a social good, upholding workers' rights and opposing privatization. A brief survey includes the battles of the British Columbia teachers almost continuously since the first election of the provincial Liberal government in 2001 (Sweetman & Slinn 2012), the Chicago teachers' strikes of 2012 and 2016, and the protests and strikes of the teachers of southern Mexico in 2008-09, 2013 and 2016. The three cities at the centre of this study have also been focal points of struggle. Toronto as the most militant site of a two week illegal province wide teachers' strike in 1997

³¹ This dynamic is especially evident in Mexico's highly centralized education system, as well as within the still nominally state-based US system in which a very significant degree of 'policy borrowing' is evident among local and state authorities vying to meet federal guidelines. It may be less evident in Canada with the dominance of provincial governments in education policy, passed to school boards for implementation. However here too, charter school advocates in Ontario laud their implementation in Alberta, and precedents set by the Ontario government in the mid 1990s with standardized testing (exposed to media and policy scrutiny in major centres like Toronto) were then enacted in other provinces (Sweetman & Slinn 2012).

(Head 2005), Mexico City as the centre of the 1989 national strike for salary increases and union democracy (Cook 1996) and New York in the 1960s (Murphy 1992).

However the teachers of these cities have not massively participated in such an upsurge in recent years. My choice of these three sites is guided by an interest in why greater levels of protest have yet to emerge so close to the policy-making centre. In contrast with each country's 'hot spots' in which militant unions resist aggressive governments, the situations and experiences of the teachers and unions in my case studies may be more typical of the status quo in their countries, and therefore perhaps more useful for understanding it. I utilize an 'extended case method' (Peck & Theodore 2015), in order to understand the movement of neoliberal education policy and its impact on teachers' work in North America.

3.5: Policy Analysis

My interviews with teachers about their work is complemented by a thorough reading of relevant state/provincial government legislation and reports, school board documents, think tank recommendations and political party policies to understand how the professional autonomy of North American educators is impacted by neoliberal policy. Following the education blog *Chalkbeat NYC* was essential for keeping up with education policy changes in New York, collected on this website either as original articles or links to the *New York Times*, *Capital New York*, *NY Daily News* and other sources. *Profelandia* was similarly useful for its original coverage and as an online aggregator on Mexican education, from the statements and activities of Mexicanos Primero on the right, to the CNTE on the left. The *La Jornada* newspaper was

essential for Mexico City and national education news. For Ontario, the *Toronto Star* most frequently covered the city and province's education news, followed by the *Globe and Mail*.

I argued above in Chapter 2.5 that the key impetus for neoliberal policy in Canada, the US and Mexico originates from domestic sources. However, the recommendations of multilateral organizations like the OECD's comprehensive annual *Education at a Glance* reports and the World Bank's *Making Schools Work* (2011) and *Great Teachers: How to Raise Student Learning in Latin America and the Caribbean* (2014) are important because of their prestige and influence on state policy makers. Frequently these documents offer a more candid expression of elite rationales for policy, unvarnished by savvy public relations framing. With this non-academic 'grey literature', I develop my principal original insights on policy mobility by applying a content analysis (Forbes 2004).

Following Ball and Junemann (2012: 12-17), I developed a network ethnography analysis of the relations between key policy actors through internet research to complement information gleaned from interviews and participation in conferences and other instances of direct observation, attempting to "follow the policy" (Peck & Theodore 2015: 42). Simple methods include studying the programs for conferences like '*Building blocks for education: whole system reform; an international summit of education experts*' hosted by the Ontario government in 2010. The event was co-chaired by Michael Fullan and Michael Barber, former special advisors on education to the premier of Ontario and the prime minister of the UK, respectively. Studying conference participation at events like Labour Notes can be applied to understanding national and international relationships between teacher unionists, and their articulation of shared analyses (see Chapter 4). Other examples include comparing lists of key funders and directors in

the ‘Who We Are’ sections of think tank websites, and tracking citations of experts through policy documents and media reports. This approach was particularly useful for me in presenting my analysis in Chapter 6 of the specific conjuncture of individuals and organizations that facilitated the rapid passage of amendments stipulating standardized teacher examination in the Mexican constitution, immediately following the inauguration of President Enrique Peña Nieto in December 2012. In the absence of access to the confidences of the participants themselves, the intention is to see if it is possible to find linkages between events like the visit of former Florida governor and future unsuccessful presidential candidate Jeb Bush to Toronto’s elite Economic Club in October 2013 to promote charter schools, for the development of policy by Ontario’s business associations and political parties. Or the extent to which pro-privatization lobby group Students First directly inspires its southern cousin Mexicanos Primero, which subsequently exercises significant influence over the education priorities of the government of Mexico.

3.6: An Epistemology for Studying Teachers’ Autonomy

To argue that ideological commonalities exist among these various policies and that they consistently generate forms of resistance aligns with the concept of Global Managerial Education Reforms (GMER) utilized by Verger et al (2013), and the concept in comparative education studies of a Globally Structured Agenda for Education (GSAE), described in sections 2.3 and 2.5. GSAE and GMER as paradigms within education policy challenge the concept of a Common World Education Culture (CWEC), developed by John Meyer to explain commonalities in education policy and governance around the world through concepts of cultural convergence. Whereas Meyer assumes a context of social consensus, the former two paradigms

begin from an analysis of divergent political-economic interests and struggles. A parallel in geographical studies of policy can be found in Peck's approach to policy mobility, which he conceives as situated within and filtered through heterogeneous political contexts at various scales, against more conventional political science policy transfer approaches in which rational actors simply choose the best ideas from elsewhere, unclouded by ideological subjectivities (Peck 2011). Through all of these alignments, I place my research within a conflict paradigm approach to social research (Babbie & Benaquisto 2002: 34).

A significant part of contemporary education policy studies illustrates the political dangers of a positivist ideology applied to social research. While the original 19th Century philosophy of French sociologist Auguste Comte that observation is the only valid source of scientific knowledge has seen many revisions and qualifications, it continues to have a significant influence over geography and other social sciences (Berg & Mansvelt 2004: 162-163). American sociologist C. Wright Mills levels this critique of a misapplication of techniques attributed in a simplified form to the natural sciences:

This model of research is largely an epistemological construction; within the social sciences, its most decisive result has been a sort of methodological inhibition. By this I mean that the kinds of problems that will be taken up and the way in which they are formulated are quite severely limited by The Scientific Method (Mills 1959: 57).

As standardized test scores are used as a primary means of evaluating the effectiveness of schools, and once inputted through the complex algorithms of 'Value-Added Measures', the capabilities of individual teachers (Kuhn 2014; Ravitch 2013), we see how this limited conceptualization of knowledge is mobilized politically with the consequence of degrading the teaching profession. If neoliberal policy advocates are able to frame the success or failures of

schools to policy makers and the general public on the basis of these metrics, I contend that the insufficient challenge they receive is due to the hold of positivist ideology over both elite and popular ideology. Social researchers using positivist methods employ the ‘God Trick’ (Haraway 1991) of framing their investigation as disembodied, objective, impartial and scientific. Their choices which led them to define and limit this study, the criteria for determining the ‘cut score’ on a test, or what is worth measuring on a test in the first place, are externalized from consideration. Their personal identity and their relationship with the subjects (objects?) they are studying is also considered irrelevant. Their numbers represent facts. They are not the biased opinions of self-interested individuals (usually teachers in this context). Drawing on continued widespread support for positivism, the fixation on test score results intersects with the political agenda of blaming teachers and schools for low results, while ruling the extremely divergent socio-economic contexts in which students live as irrelevant. Attention to these issues is considered tantamount to “making excuses” in the words of American policy advocate Michelle Rhee and former NYC schools chancellor Joel Klein. In the context of education research, positivism is exploited to marginalize the legitimacy of qualitative research that focuses on understanding the experiences or ‘situated knowledges’ (Haraway 1991) of key participants in the education system, teachers, students and their parents.

This analysis informs my decision to draw on qualitative research methods centred on interviews with teachers and participatory observation of their workplaces, alongside policy analysis drawing on texts and interviews with policy experts. However dismissing the importance of quantitative research in education policy would be self-limiting. What I argue is that positivist ideology facilitates political agendas served by reports based on test scores, when

the mystique of quantitative data serves to mask these studies from challenges to their legitimacy. Critical quantitative research challenges positivism by identifying power dynamics and questioning previously assumed governmental rationalities, while using tools like GIS to provide a more fulsome contextual analysis of social phenomena (Basu 2004b, 2009). This dissertation draws on quantitative data on numerous occasions, merged with insights gained from qualitative research with teachers and other participants, to create a ‘thick description’ (Berg & Mansvelt 2004: 177) of the present context of the struggle over teachers’ professional autonomy.

In orienting my approach to research, I take inspiration from Mill’s formulation of striving to understand how the agency of individual actors and groups such as teachers and their organizations, or neoliberal policy advocates and their think tanks, fit into the larger social structures and political contexts of contemporary Canada, US and Mexico. Much of his ideas are articulated in *The Sociological Imagination* (1959), where he critiques both empirically unmoored ‘Grand Theory’ and data driven ‘Abstracted Empiricism’ disconnected from social context. He exhorts a ‘pragmatic’ mixed methods approach, “Let every man [sic] be his own methodologist.” (Mills 1959: 224) Even more importantly, he urges a concrete engagement by the researcher with the structural problems and conflicts of the day. He poses this with a formula familiar to any community or labour organizer, of connecting personal troubles to larger political issues, linking individual biography to human history. Given my personal approach to this research that I described in sections 3.1 and 3.3, these ideas certainly resonated with me.

While writing this dissertation, I struggled to avoid ‘getting lost in the weeds of empirical details’, at the risk of burying broader applicable conclusions, crowding out the space and time to theorize on my findings. In Mill’s words, “Social research of any kind is advanced by ideas; it is

only disciplined by fact.” (1959: 71) My insider status as a teacher-researcher within many of the communities I observed perhaps made this inevitable. A challenge was to know when I had followed my case studies far enough to be able to substantiate my key arguments. At what point would going any further reduce my dissertation to a descriptive narrative, only of interest to those concerned by what happened during the first two decades of the 21st Century in the education systems of three specific North American cities? Citing Mills again, “The problem of empirical verification is ‘how to get down to facts’ yet not get overwhelmed by them; how to anchor ideas to facts but not to sink the ideas. The problem is first *what* to verify and second *how* to verify it.” (1959: 125)

In developing a conscious epistemological and ontological analysis, I was drawn towards the philosophy of critical realism as a useful paradigm. Most resonant to my case study approach is critical realism’s recognition that social structures are defined and shaped by local contexts. Further critiquing positivist ideology as well as the relativism of postmodernism (Vandenberghe 2014: 3-4), a key insight of critical realism is that facts have moral and political implications and that “social science can study both ideas, and what those ideas are about.” (Bhaskar & Collier 1998: 387). Social scientist Roy Bhaskar and others critique philosopher David Hume’s law that one cannot logically argue that a value is derived from a fact. In doing so, they develop their concept of the explanatory critique. Social research commonly involves interpreting and understanding aspects of the dominant society. Critical realists argue that value judgements are often necessarily inherent in these descriptions, as of class structure or social inequality. Citing Marx, Freud and Nietzsche:

They explain ideas that we have and live by, in ways that throw doubt on their truth. They do not *replace* the question of truth of an idea by the question its causal origins... Rather, they pose the questions of the causation and function of an idea together with that of its truth or falsehood, in such a way that the causal accounts show why we tend to have certain kinds of false belief. (Bhaskar & Collier 1998: 386)

Another example for understanding critical realism's concept of explanatory critique:

[T]he study of a particular society and a particular time will include information about the class structure of that society at that time, and also about the ideas prevalent in that society, which will include ideas about its class structure. It may be that many people in that society believe that it is a classless society, when in fact it is not.... Such beliefs may not be accidental. They may, for example, be caused directly or indirectly, in all or in part by just that class structure whose existence they are denying. (Bhaskar & Collier 1998: 387)

Bhaskar and Collier observe that close ties exist between many critical realists and social critics more generally, as with advocates for socialism. One explanation for this is their contention that explanatory critique must be made within the context of a specific society for it to have any effect or consequence (Collier 1998: 467). This argument has a particular resonance for my writing. Vandenberghe (2014) contends that a strength of critical realism is that it blends a recognition and analysis of both the significance of social structure and individual/collective agency. This enables critical realism for example, to supersede false dichotomies between humanist and structuralist conceptions of Marxism and left social theory. It recognizes both forms of analysis as important for developing practical understandings of social contexts, towards the objective of progressive political change (Vandenberghe 2014: 5-6, 30-32). This dissertation's critique of neoliberalism's impact on public education and on teachers' work provides for a logical affinity with critical realism.

4. North American Geographies of Neoliberal Education Policy

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of some key historic developments in the geographies of neoliberal education policy in North America up to the early 21st Century, providing the necessary background to the city specific case studies in the following chapters. It has four purposes. The first is to provide some historical context with an overview of the development of teacher unionism in North America as it relates to the defining of professional autonomy (section 4.1). Second, I will demonstrate the importance of the particular histories and characteristics of the case studies New York, Mexico City and Toronto as major urban centres for the development of education policy and its diffusion (section 4.2). The third is to demonstrate the existence of a specific community of neoliberal education policy mobility and resistance at the North American continental scale, within the larger global flows of ideas and governance networks (section 4.3). Here I will provide some illustrative examples of education policy movement and convergence across borders within North America since the 1980s. The final section (section 4.4) will survey the experiences of North American teacher organizations and unions of cross border collaboration on strategy and responses to state policy. These demonstrate diverse tendencies from conservative to radical unionism, and forms from top-level meetings of leaders to horizontal networks with more bottom-up participation. This chapter will introduce the importance of both structural factors informing distinctive local, regional and national contexts, and the agency of significant organizations and individuals in creating the North American geographies of neoliberal education policy, out of which important common developments can

be identified. As may already be observed, this chapter will move up and down geographical scales, analyzing developments in teacher unions and education systems from the case study cities to the state/provincial and national levels.

4.1: Professional Autonomy and the History of Teacher Unionism: Three Contexts

This section is an overview of the emergence and key developments of teachers' unions and movements and their relationship to professional autonomy in Canada, the US and Mexico up to the time period covered in the case studies of this dissertation. While distinctive historic trajectories followed in each country, broad parallels in periods of development are made below. We begin with the initial development of public education and formation of teacher organizations in the early 20th Century, follow to their consolidation as important institutions shaping the profession in a context of teacher militancy and the postwar demographic boom, and conclude with the emergence of neoliberal governance, fiscal austerity and an overall shift to the defensive for teacher unions. This sets the context for the current challenges to professional autonomy.³²

³² Despite many publications on how neoliberal policies have adversely impacted teachers and public education, relatively few address teachers' resistance or analyze teacher unions. The literature has tended to focus on individuals and at the school level, usually due to ethnographic methods, neglecting the role of teachers' unions at larger scales (Riegel 2003: 109). Studies on teachers' unions tend to be official histories like OSSTF's two books which focus on Ontario government policies and responses of the federation leadership (1971; 2005). The best history of the NEA and the AFT up to 1980 remains Murphy's *Blackboard Unions* (1992). *The Global Assault on Teaching, Teachers, and Their Unions* (2008) edited by Weiner and Compton, is an important resource for the breadth of its cases. *Worth Striking For: Why Education Policy is Every Teachers' Concern* (2015) link a critique of contemporary neoliberal policy to teachers' union struggles, also done by Weiner (2012). Labour geographers Brogan (2013) and Sweeney (2013) are important contributors, focusing on the US and Canada, respectively. *Organizing Dissent* by Cook (1996) for the depth she provides on the internal functioning of the CNTE, remains one of the best books in English not only on the Mexican teachers' movement, but on the nation's labour movement. Foweraker (1993) is an important source for the emergence of the CNTE, also covered by journalist and author Monsiváis (1987). Hernandez Navarro, one of Mexico's foremost journalists on education politics is a definitive source on the movement (2012, 2013). *No Habrá Recreo: Contra-Reforma Constitucional y Desobediencia Magisterial* (2013) (No Recess: Constitutional Counter-Reform & Teachers' Disobedience) accounts the policies of President Peña Nieto's first two years, the response of the CNTE, and downfall of SNTE boss Elba Esther Gordillo.

The Foundation of Public Education & Emergence of Teachers' Unions

At its origins in the late 19th Century, mass public education in Canada and the United States typically gave little recognition of the capacity of teachers, many of whom had limited or no professional training, to interpret the needs of their students. As documented by Ravitch (2000) in New York City's early schools, methods frequently consisted of rote learning using standard texts in large, crowded classrooms. Few students were expected to achieve more than basic literacy and numeracy. Public education in Mexico expanded rapidly in the 1920s, following the end of the Revolution. Article 3 of the Mexican Constitution, ratified in 1917 in the midst of the violent upheaval, specified that the public education system would be "free, secular and scientific,"³³ emphasizing a drive at the time to inculcate a humanistic vision of education as an important pillar of national development. It also served to demarcate the autonomy of teachers from the influence of still powerful clerical authorities and local caciques (traditional clientelistic political bosses). Teachers were important actors for the post revolutionary state. In terms of furthering social development, they were among the few federal employees located in every community. They perpetuated official ideology by cultivating a national identity (Torres 1991).

The professional prestige of teachers was heightened by their status particularly in rural communities, as local intellectuals and leaders. As a function of the vast ambitions of the post-revolutionary SEP under Jose Vasconcelos that public education would be the medium for social transformation, combined with the limited resources of the state, teachers were given a broad

³³ The adjective 'socialist' was added by the left nationalist president Lazaro Cardenas in 1934, removed by his conservative successor Manuel Avila Camacho in 1946 (Brambila 2008: 213).

mandate within which they had considerable autonomy.³⁴ Not only were they to establish schools in rural communities, but to serve as local leaders and organizers. Their formal training followed after the fact. These were the origins of the foundational myths of the Mexican education system of dedicated teachers rooted in communities. They are alternately described as the ‘martyrs’, willing to acquiesce to abysmal salaries and working conditions (Martin 1994). Reflecting the predominantly rural population of Mexico through the first half of the twentieth century and the government’s priority of establishing federal authority across its vast geography, the first teachers’ colleges in the 1920s opened in Michoacan, Hidalgo, Guerrero, Guanajuato and Puebla, with an emphasis on agricultural training. Rural teachers led many peasant and Indigenous movements, and in the case of Lucio Cabañas, a graduate of the Ayotzinapa teachers’ college in Guerrero in the 1970s, leftist guerrilla movements³⁵ (Padilla 2013; Cook 1996: 243). With education authorities lacking capacity to regularly surveil schools, a significant degree of de facto professional autonomy existed for decades in many regions of Mexico, until the introduction of the first national standardized testing system in 1992 (Aboites 2012: 16).

While New York and Ontario’s secondary schools were growing in the 1920s, Mexico’s system of middle schools (equivalent to grades 7-9) was only officially established in 1923. As late as 1958, while NYC high schools enjoyed a reputation as among the best in the US (prior to

³⁴ Jose Vasconcelos advocated paying rural teachers twice the rate of urban teachers to encourage graduates to leave cities, “there is no better training for a young teacher than to discover in the countryside the needs of the school, and to have to improvise their solution.” (quoted in Curiel Méndez 1982: 442) His vision never came to pass. Urban teachers and their schools have historically enjoyed considerably better working conditions and more resources.

³⁵ Rural normal schools became the spiritual home of the dissident teachers’ movement that coalesced into the CNTE. In the 1980s, a third of all teachers in Oaxaca and Chiapas were Indigenous bilingual instructors when the movement emerged and established its stronghold in these states (Solano 2016). They were considered centres of leftist organizing by the Mexican government, according to recently declassified Mexican intelligence agency reports, leading to efforts since the 1960s to restructure or close the schools. They were also viewed with hostility by the official SNTE leadership. Elba Esther Gordillo, SNTE president from 1989 to 2013, described them in 2010 as “guerrilla seedbeds.” (Padilla 2013: 24).

mass expansion in the 1960s), the reappointed Secretary of Education, Jaime Torres Bordet, reported that of every 1000 entrants to primary schools, only 114 graduated (an 88.6 percent drop out rate). Of these 114, 59 enrolled in secondary school, of which only 27 graduated. One in a thousand obtained a university degree (Méndez 1982: 452). Under Torres, the Secretary of Public Education (SEP) focused on retaining students and increasing overall enrolment by rapidly increasing funding for more schools and teachers (though with miserly salaries) in the 1960s and 1970s. Like the US and Canada in these decades, Mexico experienced a baby boom, but the profoundly centralized nature of infrastructure and the postwar ‘economic miracle’ in Mexico City, driven by growing manufacturing industries protected by Import-Substitution policies, led to the *zona metropolitana* (the contiguous urban area of the Federal District and adjacent municipalities in Mexico State), growing disproportionately from the migration of poor rural families. Mexico City became the preeminent megapolis of the developing world in this period, with its education system expanding apace.

Mexico’s secondary schools doubled between 1964 and 1970 to 4 379, staffed with over 78 000 teachers and attended by 1.2 million students (Cosío 1982: 410). Through the demographic boom, increased retention and higher graduation rates, secondary enrolment increased 1000% from 1950 to 1970 (Levinson 2001: 27). Secondary school only became compulsory with the General Education Law of 1993 (Brambila 2009: 219). Enforcement was delayed for nearly a decade due to the 1995 peso crisis and an ensuing deep recession (Levinson 2001: 27). Enrolment reached 93.4 percent by 2000, but only 57.3 percent of students graduated (Brambila 2009: 221). Citing government statistics (INEGI) for 2008, Marquez places the secondary attendance rate at 72 percent (2008: 156).

The mass expansion of public education in Canada, the United States and Mexico, was followed by varying approaches to group together teachers. The remainder of this section explores the growth of teacher unionism in this context. In Canada and the US, the dominant trajectory was the establishment of professional associations to regulate its membership, represented by the National Education Association (NEA) in the US (founded in 1857), which included principals and superintendents. The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) established in 1916, defined itself as a union and affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. It remained a minor presence outside of its stronghold in Chicago and non-majority unions in New York City, Philadelphia and a handful of other cities. From the outset, responsibility for K-12 public education in the US was the responsibility of local school boards, directed by state governments. Financing was divided roughly evenly between local and state taxes. The Great Society program of Lyndon Johnson in 1964 established a precedent for additional funding from the federal government. However Washington's intervention in education policy would not be significant until decades later (Murphy 1992: 225; Vergari 2013).

In Canada, K-12 education is constitutionally established as a provincial responsibility without federal intervention, while the balance of finance and governance powers between local and provincial governments was similar until centralization towards the latter in the 1990s (Wallner 2014; Vergari 2013: 232). Teachers' federations had emerged in every province but Ontario by 1917, where the Federation of Women Teachers' Association was formed in 1918³⁶

³⁶ The Women Teachers' Association of Toronto formed in 1888. They were the first group in Ontario to pursue the distinct occupational interests of teachers as opposed to earlier associations controlled by school board trustees and administrators. Confronted by the opposition as late as the 1950s of male elementary teachers to their struggle for pay equity and to base pay scales on seniority rather than the grade level taught, women teachers opted for a separate gender-based organization until attacks by the Harris government pushed the organizations to merge as the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario in 1998 (Spagnuolo & Glassford 2008: 56-58).

representing elementary teachers, followed by OSSTF in 1919 and the Ontario Public School Men Teachers' Federation in 1920. Unlike other provinces where teachers formed one unified federation³⁷ Ontario teachers were divided between five organizations, also including the Catholic Teachers' Association for those employed in the publicly funded Catholic school boards, and an association for the French language public system. None affiliated to provincial or national labour federations.³⁸ The Ontario Teachers' Federation coordinated provincial lobbying and represented its five affiliates in pension discussions, but held no formal role in collective bargaining. The Canadian Teachers' Federation had less power, it was an umbrella organization tasked with international liaisons and limited forms of inter-provincial cooperation. Ontario's five federations, relatively weak in relation to the provincial government, were strengthened institutionally with the Teaching Profession Act in 1944. This made membership in the corresponding affiliate and the payment of dues mandatory for all publicly employed teachers. With no provisions for certification, decertification or contestation by another union, it represented among the strongest institutional language in Canada (Spagnuolo & Glassford 2008: 58-59; Shilton 2012: 224). However, decades more would pass before the federations would take collective action as unions and strengthen the autonomy of the profession.

In Mexico, at the urging of President Manuel Avila Camacho and with the assistance of the government aligned Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM), an array of regional teachers' unions merged into the National Union of Education Workers (SNTE) in 1943. Like the CTM and the rest of organized labour in Mexico, the SNTE was rapidly absorbed into the

³⁷ Except for Quebec and New Brunswick with separate federations for teachers in the English and French boards.

³⁸ OSSTF and the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association (OECTA) affiliated to the Ontario Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress in the mid 1990s, in the context of significant attacks by the governing Progressive Conservatives on public sector unions.

corporatist political structure of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which through its predecessor parties had governed Mexico since the 1920s. The takeover of the SNTE in 1948 by PRI-aligned groups led by Jesus Robles Martin, extinguished democracy within the union. Robles and other bosses imposed by the state on unions were known as the ‘charros’ (cowboys), for the fashion preferences of the newly installed leader of the railroad workers’ union (Rincones 2008: 217-218; Foweraker 1993: 45-50; Torres 1991: 118-119; Monsiváis 1987).

The Consolidation of Unionism & Emergence of Teachers as a Militant Social Force

An upsurge of teachers’ activism in 1958 centred in Mexico City and led by the Mexican Communist Party, demanded wage increases and control over their own union, in the context of a major national strike by railroad workers over similar issues. Both movements were crushed by police and military units in cooperation with the charro union leadership. Robles controlled the union until 1972, when he in turn was ousted at gun point by Jongitud Barrios and his Vanguardia Revolucionaria (Revolutionary Vanguard) group. Barrios had the tacit support of PRI officials who were concerned that Robles was unable to control his restive members. Nearly from the outset, rather than serving as a legitimate union of educators, the SNTE acted as a mass membership appendage of the state-party, like most labour organizations in the PRI’s Mexico (Cook 2007; Rincones 2008: 218). The SNTE seldom advocated on behalf of its membership, and so teacher salaries and working conditions generally followed the will of the governing party in this period. Alongside its subordination to government policy, its corporatist status as a political arm of the state mobilized during election periods to support the ruling party, gave it a high degree of influence within the Secretary of Public Education (SEP). The union exercised

significant control over administration, often controlling the appointment of school and state level officials, as well as the 'sale' of teacher jobs. While ruling the union, Barrios amassed considerable power. Through the 1980s he was simultaneously a federal senator, president of the Congress of Labour (the umbrella organization for PRI-aligned unions) and state governor of San Luis Potosi (Foweraker 1993: 50-60; Torres 1991: 123; Monsiváis 1987: 170-172). The rapid expansion of the SEP in the 1950s-1970s created an increasingly unwieldy bureaucracy highly centralized in Mexico City. Combined with a desire to check the pervasive influence of *Jongitud Barrios*, federalization progressed from 1976 to 1982 under President Jose Lopez Portillo. Fuelled by a short term burst of oil wealth, the system reached its maximum extent for decades, as did teachers' salaries (alongside workers' wages overall) (Brambila 2009: 217).

The defeat of the initial large scale attempt by Mexico City teachers to organize independently of their corporatist leadership and improve their conditions was superseded by educators in New York City. With the decline of the Cold War era McCarthyism that had broken up the New York Teachers Union, the union benefited from considerably greater freedom of association at a time when municipal workers were beginning to organize and private sector unionism was near its 20th Century peak of influence (Freeman 2000). The rapid victory between 1961 to 1963 of the AFT aligned United Federation of Teachers (UFT) in signing up a majority of NYC's teachers, obtaining legal status as their official bargaining agent and winning significant gains after short citywide strikes, had explanations related to far more than a desire to match the salaries of skilled unionized private sector workers (Robertson 2000: 101-103; Murphy 1992: 222). Murphy refutes claims that it was driven primarily by status conscious,

militant male high school teachers in spite of docile female elementary teachers, citing the many examples of important female teacher union leaders to this point in New York. She argues:

If one were to dismiss the gender argument as an explanation of militancy yet agree that economic factors alone did not explain the rising militancy of teachers, there was one other issue, explored in all the studies, that can serve as a less gender-biased explanation of what was happening in the schools... teachers were fed up with the centralized bureaucracy of the schools. Teachers complained about oversupervision, increasing bureaucratization, inappropriate assignments, and a lack of control over licensing, training, and assignments. These grievances go back to the beginnings of unionization; after tenure laws had been effectively introduced, teachers were willing to strike for those same demands (as well as higher pay) after World War II. (Murphy 1992: 222)

Alongside the expansion of high school education after the Second World War, teachers in New York State in the 1960s and Ontario in the mid-late 1970s made substantial gains in defining and protecting their professional autonomy in a wave of union militancy.³⁹ In his book on the Newark Teachers Union of New Jersey, historian Steve Golin finds that its strikes in the early 1970s, directly inspired by the UFT's victories, were not solely over salaries or learning conditions, as the school board or the union alternately claimed:

Talking to teachers, I found the dichotomy was false, not only because most striking teachers wanted to make more money and improve the schools, but also, and especially, because they wanted a third thing: teacher power. ...more than anything, striking teachers hoped to end the tyranny of principals and of the Board of Education. (Golin 2002: 3-4)

Golin quotes a teacher who co-founded the union in the late 1930s, "The personal indignity that you had to undergo as a teacher when I first started teaching -you wouldn't believe it. Being treated like children. Whatever the superiors told you, that was law. Unquestioned." (Golin 2002: 10-11)

³⁹ British teachers won substantial professional autonomy through the National Union of Teachers in the early 1920s. According to Robertson (2000), the Liberal and Conservative parties feared teachers' links to socialist movements and labour, and recognized their significant electoral power. The settlement granted substantial professional autonomy and relatively generous salaries and benefits to curry their favour. A national curriculum was not pursued for fear a Labour government could implement a socialist curriculum (Robertson 2000: 90-94).

Success for the UFT in NYC inspired victories in Detroit and Philadelphia, among 26 union elections to represent over 74 000 urban teachers across the US between 1961 and 1965. Spurred by the upstart AFT that had quickly grown to 110 000 members, the NEA embraced collective bargaining and began to formally organize as a union, winning 14 elections during this period, representing 21 000 teachers, mostly in suburban and rural districts. The NEA's membership at the time stood at 943 000 (Murphy 1992: 224, 227-228). Increasing competition between the two education unions led to calls for unity. While unattained at the national level, state-level federations in New York (New York State United Teachers -NYSUT) and California affiliated by 1970. These mergers created electorally focused organizations that partially addressed the obvious limitations of the urban-focused AFT and the suburban/rural NEA which was structured to negotiate with state governments, but had little presence in large cities (Murphy 1992: 253). Murphy describes how the union victories of the 1960s and early 1970s transformed and empowered the profession:

For elementary teachers, collective bargaining meant breaks from the constant pressure of being in front of the classroom for six hours; for high school teachers it meant time to prepare for classes; for junior high school teachers it mean relief from extra lunch guard duties. Teachers were no longer told arbitrarily when they had to appear at school and when they could leave; surprise faculty meetings after school disappeared; and administrators could no longer appear suddenly in a teacher's classroom. Teachers still had to report to school at a prescribed time, they still had to attend meetings, they still had to welcome in outsiders to their classes, but what changed was the arbitrariness, the complete absence of control on the job that teachers had incessantly complained of. If the fundamental object of unionism is to give workers dignity on the job, unionization achieved that much for teachers and more. (Murphy 1992: 209)

Frustrations of a loss of professional autonomy within growing, increasingly bureaucratized school boards, resonated with teachers in Ontario a decade later according to Peter Hennessy, contracted by the Canadian Teachers Federation in 1975 to survey educators

there and in Quebec and New York State, on their motivations for participating in unions. A study in 1970 found that Ontario secondary teachers were highly status conscious, subscribing to a hierarchy in which academic subjects were ranked as the most prestigious to teach, followed by commercial and then technical courses at the bottom (Humphreys 1970). Many teachers in Ontario were estranged from their employers by the consolidation of 1400 local boards into 77 public and 49 Catholic boards in the early 1970s (Hennessy 1975: 9), “foster[ing] suspicion and hostility.” (Hennessy 1975: 10) In an alternate interpretation, the decreased proximity to their supervisors created the space in many communities for teachers to organize. Hennessy describes both the union-building effect of the breakdown of paternalist relationships from the amalgamation of small school boards, and foreshadows the political limits discussed in Chapter 2.6 of collective teacher identity formation that eschewed the community they worked in:

Schools were becoming larger, more highly structured, and more impersonal as management of education increasingly was divorced from teaching. Often, too teachers did not identify with the community in which they taught -and often enough did not even live there. The result was a progressive sense of alienation from both the school and the community; it was to the group, either the union or association -that teachers turned increasingly for security and support. (Hennessy 1975: 14-15)

An immediate cause of militancy in 1973-1975 was the imposition by the provincial government of spending ceilings on school boards in the context of rising inflation, setting a maximum funding level per student, and thereby a cap on the salary increases which boards could offer to its employees. Boards with the capacity to raise their taxes could not create a greater gulf with poorer, usually rural boards⁴⁰, creating a fiscal squeeze on the largest urban boards in Toronto and Ottawa which offered the widest range of programs (Gidney 1999: 114).

⁴⁰ A foreshadowing of the Ontario government’s later shifting of education funding under the Conservative Harris government in the late 1990s from local taxes to centrally dispersed revenues.

This policy caused many boards to lay off staff from 1971 onwards (Head 2005: 6-13; Hennessy 1975: 11). The teachers' federations pushed back to ensure their members' salaries would not be eroded by inflation. Not having the right to strike, about 7800 public and Catholic teachers across 16 mainly urban boards tendered their resignations in protest in November to December 1973. When the provincial government ruled the resignations out of order, OSSTF and the other federations conducted a one day strike on December 18, featuring a rally of over 20 000 teachers in Toronto (Head 2005: 12-16; Hennessy 1975: 5-8). Along with restoring school board control of funding and initiating a wave of local strikes that won improvements in working conditions and wage gains of over 20 percent for thousands of teachers⁴¹, the action lead to legislation in 1975 awarding full collective bargaining rights to the federations including grievance and arbitration procedures and the right to strike⁴² (Hennessy 1975: 53). With the legal rights of unions and a demonstrated capacity for militancy that had won significant material and professional gains in the mid 1970s, Ontario teachers arrived at unionism.

Secondary school became a nearly universal institution in Canada and the US in the 1960s. In Ontario as elsewhere, this coincided with policy struggles over meeting the needs of students who in previous decades would not have attended high school, and sustaining academic rigour. The debate impacted teachers' professional autonomy, as the outcome by the 1980s was a more defined curriculum and greater centralization of its development and oversight in the provincial ministry of education. OSSTF was particularly vocal where its members' employment

⁴¹ Rapid gains above the rising rate of inflation contributed to the Federal government under Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau instigating wage and price controls. The November 1974 to January 1975 strike by OSSTF Toronto ended with an imposed contract well below these gains (Head 2005: 20-24, 31).

⁴² Subject to intervention based on perceived harm to students from extended strikes or lockouts (Hennessy 1975: 53). The body established to adjudicate on this basis, the Education Relations Commission, 40 years later prohibited a series of local strikes conducted in 2015 by OSSTF in the context of provincial negotiations.

and professional integrity was at stake, as when it warned that raising the number of mandatory courses would reduce enrolment in electives and potentially increase student drop out rates. Its advocacy affected public opinion and was taken seriously by the governing Conservatives (Gidney 1999: 96-103). During this period, OSSTF led the other federations in developing significant campaign capacity to support or punish politicians and parties at election time. The strategy balanced on a tension between pragmatically engaging with the ruling party, and assisting the more ideologically aligned labour-endorsed New Democratic Party in the handful of areas where a breakthrough appeared possible.

When the teachers' movement resurged in Mexico in 1979 as the Coordinadora Nacional de los Trabajadores de la Educación (National Coordination of Education Workers -CNTE), it was preoccupied by a layer of bread and butter issues: better medical facilities for public employees, the regular payment of salaries and increases to meet rising costs of living. However beneath them all was the more intractable, far reaching and ultimately most challenging demand, control over their own union, the SNTE. With the SNTE's far reaching power in the education system, union democracy meant professional autonomy (Cook 1996; Foweraker 1993). The eruption of the Mexican teachers' movement in 1979 also marked the end of a decade long surge in workers' organizing and strikes unprecedented since the consolidation of PRI control over unions in the 1940s. Both the US and Canada (along with Western Europe) also experienced unprecedented strike waves in the early 1970s, pointing to political and economic developments (a resurgent left politics and high working class expectations combined with increasing economic uncertainty caused by rising inflation and unemployment) that were global in reach, though also shaped by distinctly national and regional contexts (Glyn 2007; Brecher 1997). Its specific

origins in Mexico evolved from social ferment and popular dissatisfaction with the government party in the aftermath of the bloody repression of the 1968 pro-democracy student movement. Many Mexican leftists were inspired by revolutionary Cuba and the recently killed Che Guevara's internationalist efforts to foment insurrections among Latin America's oligarchical dictatorships. Cook (1996) emphasizes the significance for the formation of the CNTE, that a significant number of its future leaders were graduates of the 1968 student movement. Many spent the early to mid 1970s working in central Mexico's rapidly expanding and modernizing industrial sectors⁴³, participating in the Insurgencia Obrera (Workers' Insurgency)⁴⁴ attempting to establish militant independent unions in place of the corrupt CTM (Robles & Gómez 1997). Others joined predominantly Indigenous peasant and rural labour movements in the southern states of Chiapas, Oaxaca and Guerrero, where they fought for land rights (Cook 1996; Monsiváis 1987). By the time they became teachers in the late 1970s, these activists in their late 20s and early 30s possessed considerable experience as organizers in terms of mobilization strategies and in facing state repression. As they subsumed themselves in the particular problems of their new profession, they retained an outward orientation to building broader coalitions.

Triggered by a rapidly rising cost of living due to the large scale development of hydroelectric and oil extraction projects and the tepid response of official union leadership aligned with Jongitud Barrio, teachers in Chiapas walked out in 1979, soon joined by colleagues

⁴³ The tactic of university graduates taking blue collar jobs to organize in strategic industrial sectors was practiced by Trotskyist and Maoist groups across North America in this period. See Martin Glaberman (2002). *Punching Out*. Chicago: Charles H. Kerr.; and David Owen (2005). *My Confession: The Making of a Militant*. Toronto: On the Edge Press; Robles & Gomez 1997.

⁴⁴ The movement coincided with the 1970-76 regime of Luis Echeverría, who in response to the political context, adopted a stridently leftist 'Third Worldist' public discourse and foreign policy. His government created some space from repression for labour organizers at multinational corporations. Simultaneously, Echeverría prosecuted a 'dirty war' against guerrillas radicalized by the repression of 1968, in which he was complicit as the Secretary of the Interior (Robles & Gómez 1997).

in neighbouring Oaxaca. Both were states where his Vanguardia Revolucionaria had a relatively weak hold over the union. Cook (1996) applies to this context an analysis developed by sociological theorists Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow (2007) of how successful social movements leverage strategic political conjunctures such as intra-elite conflicts. Cook (1996) and Torres (1991) emphasize the significance of conflict between Secretary of Education (SEP) officials who resented the official SNTE's control over education and so were endeavouring to decentralize some administrative provisions from Mexico City to the state level, where the SNTE's power would be diluted. Recognizing and negotiating with the CNTE in Oaxaca and Chiapas provided a means to fulfill this agenda and curb the influence of the national SNTE, which was subsequently compelled by the federal government to convene transparent elections for the union executives in these states, which the CNTE won overwhelmingly. In applying pressure on the SEP to make these agreements, thousands of teachers from Oaxaca and Chiapas traveled to Mexico City and erected a protest camp outside the SEP headquarters on Avenida Republica de Brasil. They were joined by thousands more teachers from central states surrounding Mexico City including Guerrero, Hidalgo, Mexico State and Morelos, though notably not many teachers from the capital itself at this time. Cook (1996) explains the failure of the movement in these latter states to consolidate themselves due to the far stronger political base held there by Vanguardia Revolucionaria in the form of patronage networks among the union membership and alliances with local PRI officials, who were more willing to provide police to attack marches and protest camps. Just as crucial, the teachers of Oaxaca and Chiapas launched their movement on a much stronger base of prior organization, and pre-existing alliances with local peasant and Indigenous organizations, factors which combined with less repression,

enabled them to more quickly build up a critical mass of support. When the force of the movement ebbed in 1983, the CNTE weakened in these central states, unable to force their demands for democratic state union executive elections. However while most state sections of the SNTE, including its largest in Mexico City, remained under the control of the charros, the emergence of the CNTE in 1979 set a critical precedent for an enduring independent movement. While not yet 'national' in scope, it established a significant regional base from which it would later expand. In the interim, despite these school systems in two of Mexico's poorest states remaining grossly underfunded, the CNTE transformed faculty relations, giving classroom teachers a significant voice in their work. (Monsiváis 1987: 193-201; Cook 1996: 105-173, 195-196; Foweraker 1993: 50-60). Given the importance of the SNTE in politics at all levels, the CNTE made an impact beyond the schools where their members worked:

At the local level, dissident teachers broke with clientelistic ties to national union and government officials and created largely autonomous union organizations that forced administrators to abide by teachers' collective decisions concerning their jobs and workplaces. Ambitious local union officials, displaced in those areas where the dissident teachers' movement emerged most strongly, lost their support base and often their political careers, and local PRI politicians could no longer rely on teachers' networks for local electoral campaigns. The success of the dissident teachers' movement in some regions of the country upset the regional balance of power and threatened, where it did not sever, previous ties with state and federal government, party, and union officials. (Cook 1996: 24)

The Neoliberalization of Education: Teacher Unionism on the Defensive

After common, though distinctly timed, periods of growth and consolidation, teachers' organizations in all three countries confronted firm barriers to further advancement and gains. The timing and strength of these blockages varied, but all related to contexts of state fiscal austerity and the emergence of neoliberal education policy. With some notable exceptions, a

shared outcome was the decline of teacher militancy, reducing opposition to the implementation of neoliberal reforms. New York teachers were the first, facing the city's fiscal crisis of 1975, triggered when commercial lenders refused to extend and roll over the city's debt. The White House and bankers saw an opportunity to press a common ideological cause to force New York City to dismantle its welfare state, beginning by diminishing the ranks of its municipal employees, and lowering the expectations of those who remained. It had a profound impact on the UFT. The role of New York City as a US test case for urban neoliberal policy will be explored further below in section 4.2.

In Mexico, the 1982 debt crisis was even more drastic. The value of a worker's wage plummeted. Government spending on public education as a share of the Gross National Product declined from 5.2 percent in 1982 to 2.45 percent by 1989, at the end of the deep recession (Torres 1991: 121). Teachers' salaries fell by 62 percent between 1982 and 1989, reaching the national minimum wage⁴⁵ by the end of the decade (Cook 1996: 184). Student drop out rates soared. Nationwide, the sharp rise in poverty and unemployment elicited little protest after the defeat of a 1983 cross-industry strike in which even some CTM locals participated. During this time of lessened teacher demand and low enrolment in normal schools, authorities upgraded the prerequisite required to become a teacher to the equivalent of a bachelors degree in education (Brambila 2009: 217). The CNTE was unable to expand significantly during these years. Though it consolidated its base in Oaxaca, manipulations by the national SNTE, who had made peace with the SEP led by a new, more conservative PRI government, resulted in the movement losing

⁴⁵ Initially due to the prevalence of much higher tripartite negotiated sectoral minimum wages covering most urban workers, and later due to the complicity of these state-controlled unions, Mexico's minimum wage has historically been proportionally far lower than the legal minimum in Canada or the US. Statisticians calculate salaries on the basis of how many multiples of the minimum wage a worker earns, with the bare minimum earned in the most exploited sectors (Bensusan & Middlebrook 2013: 49-51).

control of the Chiapas local in 1987. This state had a new, more repressive governor. An army general, his administration participated in the killings of hundreds of teachers, peasants and other leftist activists in the mid-late 1980s (Monsiváis 1987: 193-201; Cook 1996: 183-215).

In Ontario, austerity and neoliberal policy hit education in the early 1990s in a recession during the administration of a left leaning New Democrat (NDP) government. While the imposed salary freezes and unpaid days off were relatively mild compared to the austerity measures of future governments, it set an important precedent for undermining free collective bargaining. Not least because it was implemented by an avowedly pro-labour government, creating a deep well of cynicism towards electoral participation for many teachers and union activists, contributing to support for future alliances of a much more transactional nature. Though coupled with progressive policies, the NDP government also proposed far reaching reforms that would later be implemented by the subsequent hard right Conservative government after 1995. Gidney, Basu, Robertson and Kerr identify the NDP's 1994 'Royal Commission on Learning' as an important precedent. Arguing that public confidence in teacher effectiveness needed to be restored, the report proposed a more prescribed provincial curriculum, provincial standardized tests in literacy and math, administered through a new 'Education Quality and Accountability Office' (EQAO) and the creation of the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT). The OCT would be a disciplinary body for teachers, reducing the autonomous power of the teachers' federations to self-regulate, while the EQAO used test scores to produce tables of quantified data ranking 'good' and 'bad' schools. Despite the ideological gap with his social democratic predecessor, these proposals were adopted by the hard right Conservative premier Michael Harris (Gidney 1999: 232-233; Robertson 2000: 134; Kerr 2006; Basu 2004: 625).

Under the Conservatives, professional autonomy and working conditions were undermined with drastic reductions in daily preparation time and increases in class sizes, as well as the reclassification of vice principals and principals as management, and their removal from the federations. Ontario's teachers mounted a vigorous defence, including an illegal two week strike of all public and Catholic schools in 1997. It garnered popular support as the unions presented it in opposition to nearly a billion dollars in proposed cuts to education, rather than only the specific contractual issues of teachers. Despite militancy and broad support, their struggles remained defensive, defeating some (Eg. a proposal to replace some categories of teachers with uncertified instructors) but not all of Premier Harris' policies. Community-led efforts also forced the Conservatives to prevent the closure of a hundred schools in Toronto⁴⁶ (Gidney 1999: 256-264; Head 2005: 54-65; Kerr 2006; Rose 2002; Basu 2004).

Though the circumstances varied of New York in the late 1970s, Mexico in the mid-late 1980s and Ontario in the early 1990s, in each instance an economic downturn facilitated significant cuts to public spending on education, not reversed for years or decades. Just as significantly, the existence of these 'crises' in education facilitated politically the subsequent implementation of neoliberal policies related to privatization and incursions on teachers' professionalism (Ginsburg 1991b). Moreover, the ability of states to apparently overturn previous years of union gains, had an impact on member morale, diminishing militancy. All of this occurred alongside drastic declines in overall strike rates in all three countries, and drops in unionization rates in the US and Mexico (discussed above in section 2.7), which left the heavily unionized K-12 public education sector isolated.

⁴⁶ Dozens have since been closed due to a combination of declining student enrolment and provincial budget cuts pushing the cash strapped Toronto District School Board to raise revenue from land sales.

An important exception to this general trajectory was the national strike of half a million Mexican teachers in April 1989 (Torres 1991: 130). Marking a dramatic resurgence of the CNTE, the strike wave has since only been rivalled by the fall of 2013 strikes described in Chapter 6, where the outcomes were far more ambiguous. Cook (1996) identifies the 1989 strikes as timed to take advantage of a window of political opportunity, an important strategy in the repertoire of successful social movements. Sensing the political vulnerability of the newly elected president Carlos Salinas, widely viewed to have prevailed through electoral fraud over left candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, and perceiving that his government was not as closely aligned with Jongitud Barrios, the movement rapidly expanded across the country demanding the restoration of a living wage for its members. Mexico City's teachers joined the movement in mass numbers, led by the predominantly female elementary teachers of Section 9, the SNTE's largest local. Since the poor response of authorities to the devastating 1985 earthquake, the emergence of independent urban social movements for housing rights, and Cárdenas' 1988 campaign for president, the city had become the nation's new centre of political dissidence to the ruling PRI. Never before had teachers struck so effectively nationwide, again occupying downtown Mexico City streets surrounding the SEP offices. To head off a political crisis, Salinas deposed Barrios and promoted one of his rising lieutenants from Mexico State, Elba Esther Gordillo. Teachers won a 25 percent salary increase (the SEP had initially offered 10 percent), and Gordillo responded to pressure from the CNTE by scheduling free elections for the state executives of Oaxaca, Chiapas and Section 9. All were won overwhelmingly by the movement. Teachers in Guerrero and Michoacan were unsuccessful in applying sufficient pressure for open elections,

but did succeed in being acknowledged as representatives of the union by their state governments (Cook 1996: 266-289; Torres 1991: 131-132; Mariluz Arriaga: Interviewed Jun. 2015).

Cook attributes the success of the CNTE to its commitment to participatory, democratic processes that helped maintain the momentum of a mass movement and mitigated the corrosive effects of internal factional conflicts. The development of functioning school and district-level committees which elect delegates to state assemblies, helped ensure the movement could continue to function were it to lose control of the formal machinery of the union. This is how the CNTE functions in states where it has the support of a critical mass of teachers but lacks institutional control of the local. Also vital to the longevity of the CNTE and its ability to consolidate its bases, has been its capacity to effectively address members' day to day issues, from transfer requests to resolving payment problems, as well as the marked difference of a greater climate of freedom from interference from charro union and SEP officials at the school level⁴⁷ (Cook 1996: 193-196, 216-265).

The geographic growth of the teachers' movement from the 1989 strike was quickly challenged by the new leader of the SNTE. Elba Esther Gordillo's path to become one of the most important neoliberal policy advocates during the PAN governments of Fox and Calderon (from 2001 to 2012) and mastermind of Mexican politics, began in the early 1990s in the twilight of the PRI's era of uninterrupted national hegemony. Once under her control, the SNTE, Latin America's most powerful union, was her springboard into national politics where she became a president-maker. First she had to roll back the considerable advances won by the CNTE,

⁴⁷ The CNTE benefited in the early years of Salinas' government from Education Secretary Manuel Bartlett's decentralization of administration to state governments, curbing the power of the national SNTE controlled by Gordillo. Salinas replaced him in 1993 with future president Ernesto Zedillo, who made a rapprochement with Gordillo (Brambila 2009: 218-219). At a conference he organized in Mexico City in 2016 for opponents of the Trans Pacific Partnership trade agreement, he described the SNTE to me as "very, very corrupt."

particularly within the large Mexico City locals. In the precarious years following her appointment by Salinas, the CNTE had obtained a large minority of seats on the national executive, a majority of the executive of Section 9 representing the DF's primary teachers, and roughly half the executive of Section 10 (the city's secondary teachers). According to a secondary teacher and CNTE activist elected to Section 10's executive in the 1990s, Gordillo co-opted much of the movement's leadership among secondary teachers, and to a lesser extent in Section 9, preventing them from otherwise gaining majority control over the former. Gordillo welcomed many Mexico City dissident leaders into full time union positions for Section 10 and at the national office. Others were vaulted above the standard career steps into school directorships. Individuals in both were enrolled in the Carrera Magisterial (Teaching Career) program negotiated by Gordillo and the SEP in 1993, which grants salary increases upon completion of courses, examinations and classroom observations, without having to meet these prerequisites. While Section 9 remained under the leadership of the movement⁴⁸, these measures shifted the balance of power within Section 10 to her favour, winning control of the entire institutional structure by the early 2000s (CNTE Section 10 Activist, Interviewed Feb. 2015; Leyva & Rodriguez 2012: 544). However new waves of dissent came quickly in the early 21st Century in opposition to the neoliberalization of education.

4.2: New York, Mexico City and Toronto as Centres of Education Policy Formation

New York City, Mexico City and Toronto are important sites for education policy making and diffusion. In this section I will overview their evolution over the twentieth century,

⁴⁸ An important reason for the differences in durability of the dissident movements in Sections 9 and 10 may be attributed to the former's deeper roots in school-level and zone committees in the years prior to the 1989 upsurge (Enrique Enriquez Ibarra, CNTE Section 9 General Secretary, Interviewed Jun. 2015).

introducing how influential academics and powerful business-funded think tanks centred in these cities have wielded significant influence with policy makers. While all three cities are arguably the most significant sites for education policy development and roll out in their respective countries, the specific nature of their prominence varies. An important factor are the distinctive federal structures of government in each country, shaping how policy moves from the centre to other regions, and its ease in doing so.

New York

New York holds influence with by far the largest school district in the US, whose students represent a socioeconomic polarization that is racially and spatially organized; dynamics that are present in large urban centres across the country. It is the site of the nation's largest cluster of media, some of the most important faculties of education in terms of the number of its teacher graduates and prominent academics, and home to major think tanks on education policy. The city has an important history as a site for emulation, though not without reversals. After a late start establishing a public system in the nineteenth century compared to nearby east coast cities, from the 1930s through 1950s it was a national policy-setter with a reputation for the 'best schools' (Ravitch 2000: 142). It became home to arguably the most prestigious teachers' faculty, Teachers' College at Columbia University, primarily for its research, while City University of New York's Queens College became the largest conventional producer of teachers in the US.⁴⁹

New York's public schools were demonized as among the worst 'inner city' schools in the 1970s through 1980s in the midst of the city's fiscal crisis and the long aftermath for its public education system. Its resolution in the late 1970s was a harbinger of neoliberal policy in the rest

⁴⁹ As of 2013-14. Excluding two Arizona universities that rely heavily on online courses (Brysch 2014: 15).

of the US, and of structural adjustment programs carried out in Mexico and elsewhere in the global South by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in the 1980s and 1990s. When commercial banks refused to lend more money to the city in 1975, the federal government under president Gerald Ford saw an opportunity to use New York as a highly visible disciplinary test case against other municipal governments defaulting, while drastically scaling down the city's more expansive social democratic welfare state (Freeman 2000: 259-263):

Making an object lesson out of New York could serve as a national curative for overly generous social programs and attendant fiscal irresponsibility. Any federal aid to New York, [US treasury secretary] Simon testified in October 1975, should be on terms "so punitive, the overall experience so painful, that no city, no political subdivision would ever be tempted to go down the same road." (Quoted in Freeman 2000: 259).

According to the bankers unhappy with the city's tuition-free public university, social housing, public hospitals and extensive and affordable transit, "New York exceptionalism had to be ended, quickly and dramatically." (Freeman 2000: 263). Among the massive cuts made to New York's public services from 1975-78, over 8 000 teachers and para-professionals were laid off in the summer of 1975 (Freeman 2000: 265), resulting in a 25 percent decline in the total number of teachers. They were disproportionately African American and Latino, being among the most recently hired (Freeman 2000: 271). Class sizes rose dramatically. Rank and file anger led to a five day strike, settled by UFT president Albert Shanker⁵⁰ in exchange for freezing existing benefits and salaries, however per pupil funding adjusted for inflation did not recover until 1989 (Ravitch & Viteritti 2000).

⁵⁰ Shanker denounced calls for a general strike, describing it as "[A] political weapon associated with the communist unions of Europe. For us to use it would be irresponsible." (Freeman 2000: 267). Instead he and the union leader representing municipal employees including school custodians, teachers aides and secretaries, acceded to a corporatist plan to use the municipal workers' pension to buy \$2.5 billion in city bonds to get out of the crisis, shifting the risk of default from the banks onto their own members (Freeman 2000).

The resolution of New York's fiscal crisis through public austerity and the curbing of union militancy was a turning point for organized teachers and the broader labour movement, as well as the idea of a 'social' or welfare state. It set the stage for subsequent neoliberal showdowns at the municipal scale due to both its profile and the unusually high level of organization of New York labour and the UFT as the most prominent teachers' union. From here onwards, despite later funding increases, NYC schools struggled to be properly funded to meet community needs. As service correspondingly declined, like with municipal hospitals and transit, it came to be seen as second rate to private alternatives increasingly adopted by those who could afford them. Freeman concludes:

The fiscal crisis constituted a critical moment in the history of privatization, spreading the belief that the market could better serve the public than government... Because New York served as the standard-bearer for urban liberalism and the idea of the welfare state, the attacks on its municipal services and their decline helped pave the way for the national conservative hegemony of the 1980s and 1990s. Working-class New York led the way in both the rise and the fall of social democracy in America. (2000: 272)

Increasing popular economic and social conservatism by the late 1970s in NYC, to which racial tension greatly contributed, manifested itself in anti-union sentiment and a cynicism towards public services. A further sign of retreat from a working class social democratic vision in the aftermath of the fiscal crisis was a change in the basic approach of NYC unions like the UFT, from advocating militantly for their members, as through strikes, to joining corporatist lobby boards pushing for business and income tax cuts, and backing publicly funded private developments like convention centres to create jobs and expand the tax base (Freeman 2000).

NYC's ideological shift to the right was facilitated by foundation of conservative think tanks in this period which sought to respond directly to issues facing the city. One of the most

significant was the Manhattan Institute, formed in 1975, “in the heart of the beast” in the words of its founders (Peck 2010), to bring the ideological battle to the bastion of the US left. The Manhattan Institute initially saw its role as the provider of more academic neoliberal theory geared towards intellectuals and elites. Future mayor Rudy Giuliani was a firm supporter, attending many events, which he attributed to help shape his ‘tough on crime’ and workfare policies. His mayoralty was lauded by the Institute (Peck 2010). The think tank contributed to NYC, along with other key sites like Chicago and Washington, DC, becoming key sources of neoliberal policy innovation. By 2016 the Manhattan Institute had become involved in applied forms of policy intervention with a significant focus on education. Its website, www.schoolgrades.org purported to rate US schools on the basis of their literacy and math exam scores, normed to National Assessment of Education Progress and PISA test scores and the proportion of students receiving subsidized lunches, to offer local and international comparisons. The National Education Policy Centre at the University of Colorado, described the website’s methodology as highly flawed, stating it was unclear how to meaningfully compare the results of various different local, state and national tests, and that the Institute’s method for doing so was not transparent (NEPC 2016).

The aforementioned Teachers’ College at Columbia University is much more ideologically heterogenous. Both its importance and its political variability are embodied in the career of its PhD graduate and sometime lecturer Diane Ravitch. The foremost historian on NYC’s education system, she was the author of several books in the 1980s through early 2000s which aimed to provide ‘lessons’ from the NYC system (particularly under Mayor Giuliani) for the rest of the US. She promoted the roll out of charter schools and standardized testing with a

belief that competitive ‘school choice’ market mechanisms would subject teacher professionalism to greater rigour. Ravitch served as the Assistant Secretary of Education in the administration of George HW Bush from 1991 to 1993. From here, she became a regular contributor on education policy studies jointly published by Teachers’ College and DC based Brookings Institution, the latter considered the most influential think tank in the world (McGann 2016). She also affiliated with the conservative Thomas B. Fordham Institute, the Hoover Institution and the Manhattan Institute. In the mid 2000s she radically reassessed her beliefs. With the publication of *The Death and Life of the Great American School System* in 2010, she confronted many of the policies she previously advocated, disassociated herself from earlier collaborators at Brookings and the other right wing think tanks, and became arguably the most prominent champion of public education in the US in the early 21st Century (Bailey 2015: 327-328; Ravitch 2010: 1-14).

NYC is far from alone among key American urban centres for policy in the early 21st Century, and states can also be the primary scale of policy roll out. Chicago under Arne Duncan and Rahm Emmanuel, DC under Michelle Rhee and Florida under Governor Jeb Bush come to mind. The criteria for being a key policy influencing centre seems to be a combination of the national prominence of the city and or state plus a highly charismatic neoliberal leader with considerable power via legislation and outward influence through media and intellectuals. These are not necessarily the most extreme neoliberal education test cases, which would include New Orleans since Hurricane Katrina, Arizona’s de-facto voucher system and private charters and Michigan’s patchwork of completely privatized small school districts. However they have not had as much influence in setting the debate nationally (or beyond) as the larger centres and their

key advocate leaders. As policy advocates Michael Fullan and Alan Boyle enthused about the prominence of NYC's Bloomberg era:

New York City has attracted enormous attention over the past decade for its educational reform efforts for several reasons: It is a large prominent system; it represents an aggressive, relentless attempt by a mayor and his appointed chancellor to pull out all the stops to get successful reform; and it was carried out in a transparent, high-profile manner. Everyone in the school reform community was watching! (2014: 21)

One activist NYC teacher argues his city is an important centre for neoliberal innovation because of its significance for capitalist accumulation. As a result, it is also an important site for racial and class conflict:

Here in the city you have Goldman Sachs overseeing a charter school in Harlem. They will drop down in the middle of Harlem a gleaming cube with new everything!... And throw millions of dollars to prove that resources don't matter. And bring in a few kids by lottery, Willy Wonka style. In order to prove that the public schools suck. And then the kids who act up and won't follow their super strict rules, get kicked back to the public schools in order to further prove that the public schools can't do it. ...there's this tremendous publicity machine that promotes to the whole world that they are miracle workers in this miracle factory sponsored by Goldman Sachs. That is what we have in New York City. Goldman Sachs doesn't care in the same way about what's happening in Albany or Syracuse. New York City's like a laboratory for this remaking of the cities. As is Chicago... they really want to reconquer the city centre. It used to be, the geography of American cities was a despised inner city. The phrase 'inner city' is practically synonymous with *black*! Now the inner city is where the rich people want to be! ...Get these black people out of here! But to do that, you have to dislodge them from the schools, you've got to dislodge them from the unions... you've got to break up the connection between the school and the community. (NYC Teacher 1, Interviewed Dec. 2014)

Mexico City

Mexico City is home to the nation's second largest school authority (following Mexico State which encompasses its suburbs). Given Mexico's heavy institutional centralization in the nation's capital over the twentieth century, it holds an even greater concentration of important faculties of education, media, think tanks and offices for multinational policy centres, including

UNESCO, the OECD and the World Bank. It is the unparalleled national centre for governance, a role which has only grown more important with the recentralization of education policy over the early 21st Century described in Chapter 6. The history of Mexico's post-revolutionary education history up to the neoliberal era is dominated by a handful of elite, cosmopolitan intellectuals based in Mexico City who transformed the nation's education. SEP founder Jose Vasconcelos's influential secretary Moises Saenz, studied under the famous progressive educator John Dewey at Columbia University in New York. He brought back ideas for dynamic pedagogy and the use of schools to meet popular needs and demands in a mostly rural system, "... schoolteachers were much more than instructors of literacy and mathematics. Rather, teachers were conceived of as moral, social, and technical 'apostles' of modernity... guiding their communities to practical and spiritual liberation -and integration into national life." (Levinson 2001: 21). For its first few decades after its founding in 1921, the SEP's first objective was the expansion of public schools into rural Mexico for national development and as a political strategy of overcoming regional interests and identity to create a unified nation-state. It only began prioritizing specifically urban needs in the 1950s, coinciding with the beginning of Mexico City's explosive growth (Levinson 2001: 21-26).

The career of Secretary of Public Education, Jaime Torres Bodet from 1943 to 1946 and 1958 to 1964 provides an example of the Mexico City-based system's early international vision. After overseeing the continued expansion of the SEP after Lazaro Cardenas with its budget increasing from 76 million pesos in 1940 to over 200 million by 1946, and presiding over the founding convention of the SNTE, he served as the second director of UNESCO from 1948-52. When he returned to Mexico, he oversaw the continued expansion of the system, standardized

teacher training through normales and worked with UNESCO to organize conferences on comparative Latin American education policy with a focus on progressive pedagogy and benchmarks for eliminating illiteracy. UNESCO's Mexican offices were housed in SEP headquarters from the 1970s through 1980s, a symbol of the multilateral agency's prominence.⁵¹ Torres Bordet unsuccessfully urged the members of the Organization of American States to increase the percentage of GDP dedicated to education to 15 percent through the US's Alliance for Progress funding (Caballero & Medrano 1982: 395-402; SEP Officials 1 & 2, Interviewed Jun. 2015).

In the early 1950s, the central Escuela Nacional de Maestros (National Teachers' School) for primary teachers was founded in the Santa Maria de la Ribera neighbourhood west of Mexico City's centre, and the Escuela Normal Superior de Mexico for secondary teachers in the northwest borough of Azcapotzalco (Curiel Méndez 1982: 456-458). Both were four year tuition-free programs in which students boarded on campus, contributing to the sense of collective identity. The location of these large facilities in the capital was consistent with the state's centralizing tendencies, and coincided with the beginning of Mexico City's population explosion and the nation's rapid urbanization. They immediately became centres of activism, with secondary teachers in training protesting against initial assignments of only six hours a week, demanding at least 12 hours. Their activism flowed into the first national teachers' movement of 1956-58, centred in Mexico City (Enrique Enriquez Ibarra, Interviewed Jun. 2015). They also contributed to the rising movement of university students in the city with their colleagues at the

⁵¹ SEP officials emphasize the Mexican government's close relation with UNESCO by explaining how most other governments appoint their foreign ministry as the principal contact point, rather than the actual education authorities (SEP Officials 1, 2, 3, Interviewed Jun. 2015).

National Autonomous University of Mexico that culminated in 1968 (Curiel Méndez 1982: 442). The National Pedagogic University (UPN), founded in 1982 at the height of Mexico's oil boom, was also situated in the capital. It was to be the nation's primary centre for research in education policy, responsible with the SEP for defining the teacher education curriculum used in normales across the country, and an important faculty of education in its own right.⁵² In these respects it held a role similar to the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) in Toronto. The UPN was also conceived as an institution autonomous from Jongitud Barrio's SNTE union leadership, provoking considerable resistance from him and his successor Elba Esther Gordillo (Brambila 2008; Arnaut 2008: 148).

From the 1990s, UNESCO's role became more symbolic (and it moved from its national office in the SEP headquarters) as a source of pride for the nation's prominent engagement in international relations. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank came to occupy a more influential position as their discourses on economic growth and quantitative evaluation resonated more within the neoliberalized policy circles of the day than the well meaning but "vague" principles of UNESCO's 'Education for All' (SEP Officials 1, 2, 3, Interviewed Jun. 2015). The political synergy between the OECD led by Mexican politician Jose Angel Gurría and the government of Enrique Peña Nieto (2012-2018) over education policy will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Toronto

⁵² The national curriculum devised in Mexico City reflected the dominant ideology of the state well before its neoliberalization. The official criteria for plans of study in primary schools during the tenure of 'Third Worldist' president Luis Echeverría (1970-76), included the usual terms like 'adaptability', 'interdisciplinary' and the 'preservation of national values', alongside 'international solidarity' and 'consciousness of the historical situation' (Cosío 1982: 417).

Toronto is home to the largest public school board in Canada.⁵³ As the capital of the largest of Canada's provinces, which under the federal system hold sole jurisdiction over the governance of primary and secondary education, the city is arguably the most important centre for education policymaking in the country. Its reach is augmented as for New York and Mexico City by being the most important national site for media, such that conflicts over education in Toronto are more likely to have further reverberations than those elsewhere, a factor for teachers' struggles and education policy province wide.

The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) was opened in Toronto by provincial legislation in 1965 to conduct education research on behalf of the Ministry of Education. It was created in the context of elementary and secondary teachers' colleges merging with university faculty of educations and the requirement of bachelor's degrees for elementary teachers. In the mid-1990s it was merged with the University of Toronto's faculty of education (Gidney 1999: 54-55). Its academics have been the most prominent scholars in shaping the province's education trajectory, despite a period of marginalization during the Conservative governments of 1995 to 2003 (Gidney 1999). Chapter 7 will discuss how its most prominent professors on education policy, Michael Fullan, Charles Pascal, Benjamin Levin and Andy Hargreaves became central figures within the ambitious agendas of the Liberal governments of Dalton McGuinty and Kathleen Wynne (2003 to 2018), serving as special advisors to the premier and deputy ministers of education (Sue Winton, Interviewed Dec. 2015). According to Fullan and Boyle (2014: 67), their engagement by the provincial Liberals was inspired when McGuinty

⁵³ As well as the largest publicly funded separate Catholic school board, and two much smaller but growing French public and Catholic boards.

observed their work in England as advisors to Prime Minister Tony Blair's government on 'literacy and numeracy' strategies.

Ontario's governing Liberals in the early 21st Century found OISE to be an important source of intellectual support for a socially progressive education agenda.⁵⁴ It became a convenient target for the Progressive Conservatives, singled out for criticism in a 2013 policy document that articulated their education vision for the following year's provincial election:

The government's role is to set expectations, measure progress and help principals and teachers do the best possible job for our children. To accomplish that, we have to work with principals and teachers and give more weight to what they say. The future of education in Ontario should be shaped by the people who work directly with your children every day, not by professors at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education *in Toronto* [emphasis added] or bureaucrats in the education ministry (Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario 2013: 11).

The contradiction between the Conservative's stated interest in empowering teachers and their policy prescriptions that would actually undermine their professional autonomy are discussed in Chapter 7. One can note the words *in Toronto* and speculate on the extent that they were added to channel frustrations and resentment from rural and northern Ontario with a state perceived as removed from their reality and Toronto-centric.

Annie Kidder, the founder and executive director of the Toronto-based *People for Education*, has a nuanced, critical perspective on the powerful influence exerted on education politics by a small circle of traveling policy superstars. *People for Education* is a pro-public education research and advocacy group, founded in the mid-1990s as a parent activist network opposing the Conservative Harris government's budget cuts. Among Kidder's concerns is a tendency by OISE's high profile policy advocates to contribute to a narrowing of education

⁵⁴ However partially and contingently it was actually funded, and layered on top of existing policies creating considerable challenges for implementation (Sue Winton, Interviewed Dec. 2015).

policy goals. According to Kidder, one of the most recognizable ‘brands’ of Ontario’s policy advocates, and of the ‘Ontario model’ which they promote, is the ‘pressure and support’ formula coined by Michael Fullan. Pressure and Support refers to holding school boards, principals and teachers to account through quantitative metrics like standardized test scores administered by the Education Quality Accountability Office (EQAO) and overall graduation rates, while also providing additional resources to struggling schools. She contrasts this approach with the punitive agenda of No Child Left Behind in the US where schools with low scores are threatened with closure, “Their brand is not to attack teachers.” (Annie Kidder, Interviewed Nov. 2015).

People for Education has evolved within the context of Ontario’s education politics. From its protest roots, over the tenure of the McGuinty and Wynne Liberal governments it increasingly focused on research and has become one of the most influential education advocacy groups in Canada, drawing considerable media coverage to its reports. Its high profile annual conferences feature prominent officials from the Ministry of Education, school boards, academics and many consultants. Though comprising around half of the hundreds of attendees, no teachers were among nearly 40 expert speakers or panelists in 2015, two were included in 2016, plus a representative from a Norwegian teachers’ union. This is most notable when the session topic is assessment and evaluation practices, an important issue for teachers’ professionalism. The teachers’ federations are virtually invisible in its work, but *People for Education* has conducted several research studies with the Ontario Principals Council.⁵⁵

While the policies put forward by Fullan and others are friendlier to the teaching profession than many of the dominant discourses in the US, retired Toronto secondary teacher

⁵⁵ Author’s notes from *People for Education* conference, University of Toronto, November 7, 2015.

Lindsay Kerr's critique is that these are still top-down reforms. She contends that under Harris and McGuinty, they were implemented with little meaningful consultation with teachers and their federations. She charges that Fullan and Andy Hargreaves' prescriptions while claiming to 'empower' teachers in fact facilitate neoliberalism. They intensify teachers' work by not providing additional resources, and leave systemic external factors like poverty, which would require significant increases in funding, unaddressed (Kerr 2006: 153-157). Nevertheless, the powerful discourses emanating from OISE are part of the explanation why Toronto remains a centre for policy that's divergent from the dominant ideas south of Ontario's borders.

The dominance of these three cities as policy centres persisted through changes in ideology. The distinctive federal structures of government in each country is also an important means for understanding differences in how New York, Mexico City and Toronto act as policymaking centres. While policymaking power is highly centralized in the capital Mexico City, it is comparatively far more decentralized through provincial/state administrations in Canada and the US, in which Toronto and New York's influence is more defined by example than executive fiat, since while Ontario and New York State are among the most important subnational entities within their respective countries, their education administrators can only give suggestions to authorities in Los Angeles or Vancouver. What is common among the case studies is the importance of the metropolis as policy centre, with both a critical concentration of state power and influential intellectuals, and as a proximate, large scale site for implementation.

4.3: Rolling Out Neoliberal Education Policy: Key Authors and their Texts

This section provides a brief overview of how the ideas that became known as neoliberal education policy as described in section 2.5 evolved in the context of North America and became the dominant frame of reference for governance. It will show how these particular ideas facilitated both a tendency towards a scaling up of education policy and increasing cross-border mobility. This discussion will also suggest some reasons for the greater mobility of neoliberal education policy from the US to Mexico, than from either country to Canada.

Many accounts of the emergence of neoliberal education policy begin with the publication of *A Nation at Risk* by the US Department of Education in 1983 (Kuhn 2014; Ravitch 2010). While some of its concerns were historically specific and its prescriptions scarcely mention standardized testing or school choice (Ravitch 2010)⁵⁶, its legacy stems from being a high profile declaration of ‘the crisis’ in public education. Issued by a national authority, this profile served as a precursor for the future scaling up of education policy to this level in the 2000s. In the meantime as the neoliberal era emerged, it facilitated a national ‘discussion’ that precipitated rapid policy exchanges at the state and local levels. It soon became international in the scale of its analysis, with academic Philip Coombs’ influential *The World Crisis in Education* (1985), a timely sequel to his *The World Educational Crisis: A Systems Analysis* (1968). Both complain of the ‘disparity’ between education systems and economies, rising cost of education and propose to replace teachers with technology (Ginsburg 1991a: 13-14; Hernandez Navarro 2013: 71).

⁵⁶ Ravitch observes “[W]hen we contrast the rhetoric of *A Nation at Risk* with the reality of the No Child Left Behind legislation of 2002, *A Nation at Risk* looks positively idealistic, liberal, and prescient.” (2010: 29).

Mexican President Carlos Salinas was perhaps the first key importer of neoliberal education policy from the US to his country.⁵⁷ He initially proposed standardized tests for primary and secondary students and their use to evaluate teachers, as well as entrance exams for high school and university during his presidential campaign in 1988. Mexico's CENEVAL high school and university application exam was designed as a "detailed replica" according to Aboites, of the US's semi-non profit corporation Educational Testing Service, which administers NAEP, SAT, GRE and TOEFL tests on behalf of universities, school districts, states and the Department of Education in the US and the UK. The CENEVAL exam was initiated at the end of his term in 1994 to coincide with the launch of NAFTA (Aboites 2012: 333-336). Aboites contends that Salinas and his peers willfully ignored substantive evidence available by the early 1990s of the failings of similar tests in the US:

The school aptitude test was implemented in the US through the initiative of a group of businesspeople in the context of the reassessing of education policy by the government of that country. In Mexico it was imposed even more easily and quickly thanks to a powerful and authoritarian government-business alliance (Aboites 2012: 329).

*Politics, Markets and America's Schools*⁵⁸ published in 1990 by Terry Moe and John Chubb, academics at the Brookings Institution, was important as an early intellectual argument frequently cited by other academics and policymakers for introducing market mechanisms into public education. It advocates for 'choice' through school vouchers and de-professionalizing teaching by removing certification requirements and eliminating teachers' unions. It represents the fully envisioned, 'hard' version of the neoliberal agenda. Moe and Chubb's work gained

⁵⁷ The pivotal role of the Salinas regime, following the profound austerity administered by his predecessor (and the IMF), for neoliberalizing the Mexican state, can be summed up in the halving of the public sector's share of GDP over the course of his tenure from 41.8% to 23.2%. Salinas privatized hundreds of state-owned enterprises, which combined with corporate and income tax cuts, perpetuated chronic budget austerity (Marquez 2008: 154).

⁵⁸ Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

international influence and bolstered its credibility at home through its uptake by the World Bank as part of its curated ‘policy menu’:

The rationale and evidence used by the [World] Bank and other agencies in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s to promote the privatisation of primary and secondary schooling in developing countries has often come from the United States. The two studies by Coleman and Chubb and Moe were and still are used to show the benefits of privatising schools, and the small voucher experiments in the United States are used similarly. (Klees 2008: 322)

Joseph P. Viteritti, a former longtime collaborator with Diane Ravitch, especially on books discussing New York, is considered by neoliberal education advocates to have made important contributions to developing their narrative beyond Moe and Chubb’s market efficiency. Viteritti’s career is another example of New York as an important centre for neoliberal education policy and the mobility of top level policy advocates. A professor at the City University of New York, he has previously taught at New York University, Harvard and Princeton, and served as special assistant to the chancellor of schools of New York City, Boston and San Francisco (American Centre for School Choice 2015). According to the American Centre for School Choice, which lobbies on behalf of charter schools and voucher programs, his book published by the Brookings Institution, *Choosing Equality: School Choice, the Constitution, and Civil Society* (1999)⁵⁹, “helped shift the debate about school choice from a discussion about the efficacy of free markets to a moral argument about how schools might better accommodate the educational needs of poor and under-represented communities.” (American Centre for School Choice 2015). This change in discourse represents one of the most important shifts in political strategy that characterizes how neoliberal education policy transitioned from an initial ‘roll back’ phase that attacked the legitimacy of the public sector to a more sophisticated

⁵⁹ Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

‘roll out’ phase in the early 21st Century (Peck & Tickell 2002). The latter discourse which frames poor and racialized children against self-interested unionized teachers was presented in the high profile anti-public school documentary *Waiting for Superman*, released in January 2010 at the Sundance film festival in the US. Its Mexican clone *De Panzazo!* was released in October 2010 at the Morelia International Film Festival in Mexico (Hernandez Navarro 2012: 429-430).

The Washington DC based Brookings Institution’s status as the most influential think tank in the world (McGann 2016) is facilitated by its formidable resources including a large staff of researchers at this ‘university without students’. While it portrays itself as politically ‘centrist’, many of its flagship publications on education policy, as can be seen in the citations throughout this chapter, are themselves associated with conservative free market think tanks, academic research centres and business lobby groups. Its major edited volume *Education Governance for the Twenty-First Century* (2013) includes contributors affiliated with the American Enterprise Institute (Frederick Hess, Olivia Meeks), the Center for American Progress (Cynthia Brown), the Thomas B. Fordham Institute and the Hoover Institution (Chester Finn Jr and Michael Petrilli), and a New York City charter school management organization. There are also a smattering of political science, economics and education policy professors such as Jeffrey Henig of Teachers College. Among the contributors there is scant K-12 classroom teaching experience. None are associated with teachers’ unions. Most of the contributors share similar assumptions that the problems of public education have little or nothing to do with funding or social equity, and everything to do with unions and school boards that disagree with their prescriptions. Hess and Meeks cite a survey of US school board officials in which 40 percent oppose hiring non-traditionally trained teachers (Eg. through Teach for America), half oppose forms of school

choice (charter schools vouchers, eliminating neighbourhood schools) and 80 percent oppose new charter schools. He admonishes them for favouring “genteel measures” such as more professional development for teachers and principals, “while steering clear of more disruptive proposals” which they claim are the best ways to improve student learning (Hess & Meeks 2013: 109). For Hess and his compatriots, it’s the thousands of school board officials who are wrong. As with teachers, working within education makes them interested, rather than informed parties.

Significant elements of education policy mobility in Latin America occur between southern nations but are mediated by (northern led) multilateral agencies like the World Bank. Messina (2008) contends that for issues of education governance, of which the dominant policy proposal in Latin America from the 1990s onwards were forms of decentralization (Eg. ‘school based management’ and federalization), the most significant sources of inspiration for Mexico were experiments by other Latin American nations. Particularly Chile, which was the first to implement radical decentralization as part of its neoliberal reforms to education under dictatorship in the mid-1970s. Also significant were the Escuela Nueva experiments in Colombia, and projects from the early 1990s in Argentina, Brazil and Spain (the latter due to ease of linguistic exchange). All of which were analyzed and promoted by the World Bank. This policy affinity is due to shared socioeconomic conditions within the region (more so than with developed countries like the US or Finland) and preexisting channels for policy exchange, such as the regional branch of UNESCO (SEP Official 2, Interviewed Jun. 2015). Messina notes a distinction of discourse between the World Bank’s ‘human capital theory’ and the more humanist vision of UNESCO emphasizing rights and equity and professional development for teachers. She acknowledges some authors see an emerging convergence in ideology between the two, with

UNESCO becoming more neoliberalized. It is difficult to measure the extent to which the World Bank drove policy mobility versus national governments, but it appears the Bank was significant as a key broker, shaper and funder of ideas taken up by sympathetic governments.

According to Messina, the literature on education decentralization was most developed within the Latin American context, serving as a model for African and Asian countries (Messina 2008: 15-20). Decentralization became a “global discourse” through its uptake by UNESCO, the OECD and the World Bank, though with distinctions among them of what it entails. For the Bank it is primarily about greater efficiency in education disbursements and reducing them where possible through substitution with private sources, whereas for UNESCO it is more about effectively meeting local needs (Messina 2008: 22-24). Brambila concludes:

This expected common education agenda, in Latin America’s case, consists of a limited number of general ideas that are elaborated daily in the multilateral organizations and in many other agencies, such as governmental offices, universities, foundations, academic associations, and specialized journals. They are part of an *education discourse* from which it is practically impossible to escape. ... Decentralization, educational quality and coverage, privatization and social participation, acquire tones, and various and even opposed meanings according to the particular features of each nation. (Brambila 2008: 222)

However it will be demonstrated that while decentralization discourse (Eg. school based management and autonomy) has been retained in Mexico, over the early 21st Century the most significant trend in education governance has been centralization of policy in the executive of the national government, as in the US and at the provincial level in Canada. This was the means to attempt to implement an array of neoliberal policies that provoked resistance from teachers’ unions, which was most effective at lower levels of scale (ie. municipal or regional levels).

One means to measure the World Bank’s influence on Mexico’s education policy is by the size of its loans and grants, which peaked in 2010 at \$6.4 billion, dropped to \$2.8 billion the

following year and has since declined to a projected \$500 million in 2016 (World Bank 2016).

Meanwhile, the OECD has increased its influence over education policy, arguably eclipsing

UNESCO (Sellar & Lingard 2013: 716), particularly in Mexico (SEP Officials 1, 2, 3

Interviewed Jun. 2015). A senior official in Mexico's Secretary of Public Education (SEP),

credits the OECD with creating awareness of its own qualitative deficiencies:

It was the OECD that came and said, 'Yes you have many schools but they [students] are not understanding what they're learning, they don't understand what they're reading and in some cases can't even complete basic mathematical equations.' But this was the OECD that opened our eyes, not UNESCO. (SEP Official 1, Interviewed Jun. 2015) [Author's translation].

Their colleague continues:

It's not as if the government says 'from this moment on, I'm going to work more with the OECD than with the United Nations.' No, we were working on a series of programs that we wanted to strengthen. The OECD has more interest in evaluation, and so we've asked for their studies (SEP Official 3, Interviewed Jun. 2015) [Author's translation].

A tangible means of measuring this influence can be found in the publications issued by the

OECD directed towards Mexico's education system, that are endorsed or republished by the SEP,

such as the 250 page *OECD Review of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Mexico 2012*.⁶⁰

It is also found in the biographies of key policymakers like Mexican academic Sylvia Schmelkes,

a researcher with the OECD before becoming president of the National Institute for the

Evaluation of Education (INEE), the governmental authority responsible for overseeing

Mexico's testing systems of students and teachers. Beyond Mexico's particular political

dynamics, like the World Bank, the OECD gained importance among its member as the purveyor

of internationally comparable education statistics, particularly its Program for International

⁶⁰ Santiago, Paulo et al (2014). *Revisiones de la OCDE sobre la Evaluación en Educación: México 2012*. Mexico City: Instituto Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación.

Student Assessment (PISA) of the performance of 15 year old students in reading and math since 2000 (Sellar & Lingard 2013: 716-717). For Winton, the PISA is:

[O]rganizing behaviour all over the world and definitely in Ontario. And it's very effective. A lot of policy isn't effective. But this policy linked to economics, it's really taken hold as a dominant discourse. Last year our math test scores were lower. A lot of people said they actually weren't lower, there was more people in the game so our overall ranking fell, but that set off a lot of dialogue and movement around where our math education should be and what we should be doing. (Professor Sue Winton, Interviewed Dec. 2015)

According to the World Bank's report, *Great Teachers: How to Raise Student Learning in Latin America and the Caribbean*:

Hard data on education system results are a crucial political tool. Especially powerful are data on student learning outcomes, results that are internationally benchmarked. Political leaders' use of these to build the case for reform has been a factor in all successful strategies to date. Of all international tests, the OECD's PISA seems to resonate most strongly with the business community and civil society groups (Bruns & Luque 2014: 39).

Robertson adds from a critical perspective:

Given that the OECD represents the interests of powerful member states and the multinational corporate sector, and, it can be argued convincingly, is ideologically committed to the new global competitive agenda, it is a matter of considerable significance how it articulates the issues and trends concerning teachers. In other words, given that the OECD sets important dimensions of the reform agenda for member nations on economic and public sector activity, the assumptions upon which this agenda are framed is very important, even if member nations choose to ignore the agenda. (Robertson 2000: 206)

Sellar and Lingard (2013) observe that the PISA has also led to the global prominence and celebration of the top scoring education system of Finland, whose features include a high degree of professional autonomy for teachers and an absence of measures celebrated by neoliberal reform advocates in North America including high stakes testing and 'school choice'. However policy lessons from Finland are absent from the principal recommendations which the OECD provides to its member nations, as will be seen in its *Getting it Right: Strategic Agenda for*

Reforms in Mexico (2013) discussed in Chapter 6. This selectiveness suggests the OECD's neoliberal ideological frame described above by Robertson.

A key question is why the most aggressive neoliberal education policies pursued by political leaders in the US and Mexico, which threaten to seriously undermine the professional autonomy of teachers and privatize public education, have had much more difficulty taking root in Canada. After participating in the 2015 conference of the American Education Research Association⁶¹ in Chicago, Annie Kidder left with the impression that “Americans had just given up on the idea of public education itself.” (Interviewed Nov. 2015). Like Sue Winton (Interviewed Dec. 2015), Kidder believes differences in popular ideology and the strength of key political actors are important:

It's also our core value in Canada about social democracy...what we also don't have in Canada is huge corporations making lots of money off education, because we still assume, even though less and less, that we'll pay taxes, that the testing systems aren't private, they're a part of our government. So we're still leery about private involvement in government, or even the idea of ... private companies, non-profit or for-profit, running schools (Interviewed Nov. 2015).

However, she notes that there are gathering voices for similar policies in Ontario, citing a 2014 conference on education she attended hosted by the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management. The K-12 panel led by speakers from Teach for America and US charter schools, elicited support for bringing their programs to Ontario. Kidder sees emerging forms of ‘school choice’ within the public system, such as Toronto's selective specialty programs, as a worrying step in the direction of the advanced social segregation and privatization which exists in the US system. This topic will be further pursued in Chapter 7.

⁶¹ The largest academic association for studying education in the United States.

The scaling up of education policy to the national level in the US in the early 21st Century under presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, responsible respectively for No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation and the Race to the Top program (both discussed in Chapter 5), were crucial in accelerating the neoliberalization of education. The absence of similar constitutional means to do so in Canada, may have hindered a faster movement of policy across provincial education systems⁶². Vergari contends that a larger Federal role in US education facilitated a stronger and more rapid push to “performance standards” through standardized exams compared to Canada. Both state and provincial test scores are reconciled against PISA and random sample groups of students participate in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (US) and the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (Vergari 2013: 241; Wallner 2014: 222-226). However no structure with equivalent punitive powers exists in Canada to those held by the US Department of Education through NCLB (rescinded in 2015) or Race to the Top. There is evidence that a high degree of inter-provincial policy mobility occurs through the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC), which also represents the country in education discussions at the OECD (Wallner 2014). However it “lacks enforcement power” held by some initiatives of the US National Governors’ Association (Vergari 2013: 239). Distinct roles for education policy at the federal level in Canada and the US, the differences in political culture cited by Kidder and Winton, and more effective provincial teachers’ unions, are used by Mindzak (2015) to explain why charter schools have not expanded in Canada beyond their initial

⁶² One area in which the federal government has intervened in provincial education is through decisions of Supreme Courts on labour conflicts. Recognizing the precedent it would set for other provinces, the governments of Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Quebec intervened in support of the British Columbia government in an appeal by the BC Teachers Federation that BC illegally removed clauses on class sizes and specialist teachers from collective agreements. The BC government is now required to hire hundreds of teachers to restore class sizes to pre-2002 levels. The BC Teachers’ victory took 14 years (O’Neil & Sherlock 2016).

beachhead of a couple dozen schools in Alberta. Implemented in 1994 in the context of an ideologically conservative provincial government inspired by contemporary Republican politicians in the US, and in contrast with their continued proliferation south of the border, Mindzak concludes “Canadians do not appear to be interested in such reforms and continue to largely support their systems of public education.” (2015: 105).⁶³

Political momentum for the neoliberalization of education emerged with varying intensities in every province during the period studied here. However it could be argued that the absence of a federal mechanism for strengthening the push behind these policies, such as through the engagement of powerful national actors (as Mexicanos Primero in Mexico or myriad similar business-led organizations in the US) has maintained education policy in Canada on local and provincial scales where teachers and community groups are more able to exercise political pressure. These ideas will be explored further in the case studies.

4.4: Teachers’ Diplomacy, Policy Mobility and Transnational Solidarity

As I explained in the conclusion of Chapter 2, *Towards a Labour Geography of Teacher Autonomy*, a central premise guiding this study is that workers and their organizations possess agency and the capacity to intervene in the economic geographies in which they are situated. Given the focus of the preceding section on elite actors in the movement of North American neoliberal education policy, this section considers the engagement of teachers’ organizations, both official unions and informal networks, in transnational policy mobility. Andrew Herod’s work (2001) on how labour organizations utilize spatial strategies include the problematic history

⁶³ Also see Wallner 2014: 230-231.

of top level union strategy. In one study, the Cold War era American Federation of Labor intervened in Mexico and Venezuela to subsidize anti-communist, conservative unions and marginalize their left wing rivals, as part of its domestic strategy of maintaining a positive relationship with the US government.⁶⁴ In this vein, an overview is provided here of how SNTE leaders Elba Esther Gordillo and her successor Juan Diaz de la Torre, have practiced international labour diplomacy to burnish their weak legitimacy at home. Following this, a more hopeful presentation is made of the development since the early 1990s of the Trinational Coalition in Defence of Public Education, through the leadership of provincial teachers' federations in Canada, Mexican solidarity activists in the US and grassroots groups aligned with and inside the democratic teachers' movement of Mexico. Mention is also made of another direction in transnational teachers' solidarity, the inspiration and support of Canadian and Mexican teachers in the emergence of 'rank and file caucuses' in urban US teachers' unions.

One measure of SNTE leader Elba Esther Gordillo's trajectory from an authoritarian in the classic corporatist style who gained some legitimacy by extracting tangible benefits for her members, to an authoritarian reliant on wealth and elite connections, can be found in her engagement in international teachers' diplomacy. According to Hernandez Navarro (2013) and Professor Enrique de la Garza Toledo (Interviewed Feb. 2015), the efforts were an extension of her ambitions for leadership apparently unquenched by her power in national politics and control of the teachers' union. Her courting of intellectuals with "dinners in deluxe restaurants, trips,

⁶⁴ In a particularly egregious example, the CIA sponsored American Institute for Free Labor Development, in which Albert Shanker and the American Federation of Teachers were particularly active, assisted military coups against leftist governments in Brazil and Chile in the 1960s and 1970s (Kuehn 2006: 24).

book printings and paid conferences” were to compensate for her “profound lack of prestige in public opinion” (Hernandez Navarro 2013: 129). From 1991 to 2000, with considerable financial assistance provided by the Mexican government, Gordillo’s SNTE hosted a series of four international conferences over which she presided on public education, with delegations from teachers’ unions across the Americas and beyond (Enrique de la Garza Toledo, Interviewed Feb. 2015). The first event gathered together academics and union leaders with a significant critical analysis of education policy and its drift towards what would later be described as neoliberalism. Conference papers reprinted in *Understanding Educational Reform in Global Context: Economy, Ideology, and the State* (Ginsberg 1991), are extensively cited above in Chapter 2 for their discussion on teachers’ professionalism.

Under Gordillo, the SNTE was an active affiliate of the Confederation of American Educators (CEA)⁶⁵. The SNTE funded the creation in Mexico City in 1993 of the Institute for Education and Union Studies of America (Instituto de Estudios Educativos y Sindicales de América -IEESA), following a joint proposal of the SNTE and the CEA. It would be directed by Gordillo’s son in law. At its peak in the late 1990s, the centre had a full time staff of 60 academic researchers to pursue its mandate of studying education in the Americas (Enrique de la Garza Toledo, Interviewed Feb. 2015). The resources of the institute have declined considerably since

⁶⁵ Founded in Buenos Aires in 1928, the CEA became the Latin American affiliate of the World Federation of Teachers’ Unions, a branch of the Communist aligned World Federation of Trade Unions. Most provincial teachers’ unions conducted international activities through the Canadian Teachers’ Federation. Throughout the Cold War it avoided engaging with Latin American teachers’ unions as they were seen as too “politicized”, or in other words, too left wing. The strength of the CEA was a symbol of this. Leaders of the BC Teachers Federation representing the Canadian Teachers Federation in the late 1960s at the World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession exposed that 85 percent of the latter’s funding came from the CIA. The World Confederation was dominated by the National Education Association, which routinely paid the dues of member unions in developing countries. It tried unsuccessfully to undermine the CEA. The International Federation of Free Teacher Unions led by American Federation of Teacher president Albert Shanker was even more ideologically committed to the US side of the Cold War (Kuehn 2006: 20-22, 26, 59-60).

the fall of Gordillo in 2013. Interestingly, while the institute is clearly a branch of the official SNTE, its publications carry a markedly critical analysis of Enrique Peña Nieto's education policies that are lauded by the Juan Diaz de la Torre union leadership. They are described in an online editorial by the institute as neoliberal, business-driven and resulting in the "devalorization of teachers' labour" (IEESA 2015).

Gordillo's increasingly prominent public reputation in Mexico for political manipulation and corruption likely had an effect of reducing prospects for international union collaboration, even if the opposition that she generated among her members was less likely to be heard. After keeping a low profile for a year after Gordillo's arrest, and while teachers grouped around the CNTE waged protests across the country against Peña Nieto's education policies, in 2014 her successor Juan Diaz de la Torre initiated an aggressive outreach effort to the highest profile international education institutions. With the SNTE's print and online communications and through the media, de la Torre strove to present to the nation and his own membership, the image of an upbeat, positive union whose forward-looking embrace of necessary reforms was endorsed by significant authorities abroad (El Universal 2015; La Jornada 2015).

Under Juan Diaz de la Torre, a delegation of SNTE leaders were dispatched to the Washington, DC headquarters of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) in July 2014. The Mexican union reported that among the themes discussed were "social participation, workplace violence, legal issues and union governance including transparency, accounting, training, service unions, and the training and evaluation of teachers." (SNTE 2014a). Several days later, Juan Diaz de la Torre met AFT president Randi Weingarten at her union's national convention in Los Angeles. The SNTE also reports on a meeting here with the president of Education International,

the global federation of teachers' unions affiliated with the International Trade Union Confederation. A photo of the Education International president and de la Torre embracing was prominently placed on the SNTE website under the title "Education International recognizes leadership of the SNTE". De la Torre responded to a warm endorsement that the "SNTE has transformed itself to work at the side of teachers and give them certainty in their new role and at the same time redefine their relationship with the government, without losing their autonomy." (SNTE 2014b; SNTE 2014c). The SNTE reported additional meetings with AFT leaders from Texas, California and Illinois, where agreements were made for benefits and discount plans accessible to members of both unions (SNTE 2014d). Leaders of the AFT subsequently travelled to Mexico City to meet with the SNTE executive in September 2014 and April 2015, in the latter event holding a press conference at a primary school in the middle class borough of Benito Juarez (SNTE 2015a).

Having established strong recognition from the AFT and Education International, the SNTE pursued endorsement from UNESCO and the OECD. In contrast to Gordillo's early international activities, de la Torre reached out to elite policy makers and proudly asserted his union's support for their agenda⁶⁶ (El Universal 2015; La Jornada 2015). SNTE leaders praised Peña Nieto's policies in a meeting with a UNESCO delegation studying Mexico's teacher evaluation systems:

The SNTE is an institution within the Mexican State that has to assume its commitment for the public policies that serve to improve education. If doing so represents the transformation of our profession, we are in agreement. We are very clear that the right of children to a quality education is not opposed to the rights of education workers.

⁶⁶ An international conference convened by the SNTE in September 2015 in Monterrey, featured alongside union leaders, directors of the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (INEE) responsible for administering standardized testing and the Confederation of Mexican Employers (COPARMEX) (El Universal 2015).

(SNTE 2015b) [Author's translation]

At a later Mexico City meeting with UNESCO in April 2016, the SNTE again reported the blessings (“UNESCO recognizes the SNTE for its work in support of teachers”) from the UN agency for its collaboration with the government. “The most important thing we value is the quality of the relationship between the Secretary of Public Education and the SNTE.” announced a union spokesperson (SNTE 2016b). Turning to the OECD, SNTE representatives flew to the agency’s Paris headquarters in January 2016 to meet with senior education policy staff and the president of Education International (SNTE 2016c). The relationship was consolidated with a meeting in Mexico City in October 2016 with OECD general secretary Jose Angel Gurriá, where the union’s importance was reiterated in administering remedial online courses for teachers who did not pass the standardized exams prescribed by Peña Nieto’s government (SNTE 2016d).

The SNTE under Juan Diaz de la Torre has engaged in considerable work to provide endorsements and validations with significant international actors for the policies of Peña Nieto’s government. This occurred at a time when Mexican authorities have been threatened not only by ongoing disruptive protests from the teachers’ movement in the CNTE, but by a widespread discrediting of Peña Nieto’s regime at home and abroad. These include the disappearance of 43 student teachers from the Ayotzinapa College in September 2014 (see Chapter 6), many other high profile incidents of violence with state complicity, corruption, and persistent poverty and inequality despite the promises of neoliberal reforms like the privatization of energy. This support from de la Torre is surely welcomed by Peña Nieto. It can also be read as a sign of the union’s vulnerability and dependence on the state. While engaging in this process, the SNTE is

also trying to counter the international reach of critical portrayals put forward by the CNTE of neoliberal reforms, in which the SNTE has invested its credibility and support.

The most important means by which Mexican educators critical of their government's neoliberal reforms have sought international solidarity has been through the Trinational Coalition in Defence of Public Education⁶⁷ (Arriaga 2008: 225). Education activists from Canada, Mexico and to a lesser extent the US, concerned about the implications of the North American Free Trade Agreement for public education, began a series of meetings in January 1993 in Olympia, Washington. At subsequent meetings in Mexico in 1994 and 1995, OSSTF, Quebec federations, and the British Columbia Teachers' Federation⁶⁸ formally joined, as did the CNTE and its largest state sections, as well as major university workers' unions in Mexico City. Neither the American Federation of Teachers or the National Education Association formally participated due to their affiliation alongside the SNTE in Education International (Kuehn 2006: 174). An initial unifying concern was around proposals, since dropped, by the US's Education Testing Service towards a continental certification scheme for teachers, which could result in deprofessionalization (Kuehn 2008: 62-66). The Trinational's biennial conferences which provide critical analysis of contemporary education, rotate between Canada, the US and Mexico, with the participation of the Chicago Teachers Union, the United Teachers of Los Angeles and the Professional Staff

⁶⁷ I became involved in the Trinational Coalition after attending its 2010 conference in Montreal as a representative of OSSTF. I have since participated in many events organized by the Trinational in Mexico, including as a spokesperson for OSSTF at an 'International Solidarity Conference' in October 2013 near the height of the first wave of strikes and protests against the Ley de Servicio Profesional Docente of Peña Nieto.

⁶⁸ The latter has provided the most consistent financial and infrastructure support for the Trinational, particularly through long active individuals like BCTF researcher Larry Kuehn, who with Dan Leahy, an academic who organized the initial meeting in Olympia, and Maria de la Luz Arriaga, an economics professor at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) have provided crucial continuity (Kuehn 2006). As participation within the Trinational for OSSTF is not an official duty to the extent of its membership in the Ontario Federation of Labour or the Canadian Labour Congress, its ongoing participation owes much to the role of Domenic Bellissimo, Director of the Communications, Political Action & International Affairs Department.

Congress of the City University of New York after left caucuses were elected in these unions (Roman & Velasco Arregui 2015: 130-131).

Led by the Mexican section, its most active national contingent, the Trinational organizes international solidarity campaigns when its member organizations are engaged in struggle with their respective state. One of the most significant contributions of the Trinational has been overcoming the international isolation of the CNTE and Mexico's other dissident education unions, by creating direct connections and spaces for support particularly with the BCTF, OSSTF and the left leaning local US teacher unions (Kuehn 2006; Arriaga 2008). While the official SNTE leadership is not known to have publicly commented on the Trinational, the former's aggressive outreach efforts with international unions should also be seen in the context of the Trinational's success in raising concern among teachers in BC, Ontario and some US cities for struggles of their colleagues in Mexico which were unsupported or opposed by the SNTE. The movement for justice since September 2014 for the 43 disappeared student-teachers of the Ayotzinapa College and the 2013 and 2016 strikes and protests against Peña Nieto's standardized teacher evaluation are recent examples (Potter 2016).

In the early 21st Century, the proliferation of online social networking applications like Facebook and Skype, along with lower cost air travel have considerably reduced the resource threshold required to participate in international activities for teacher activists across North America, with or without the official endorsement of their union. Leaders of the CNTE in the Mexico City elementary teachers' local post calendars of upcoming events on Facebook which are shared by their online followers. The biennial conferences of left 'rank and file' labour activists organized in the US by Labor Notes, have become an important space for teachers

seeking to radicalize their unions.⁶⁹ Conferences in 2012, 2014 and 2016 were sites for networking among teachers inspired by the successes of the Caucus of Rank and File Educators (CORE) in winning elections to the executive of the Chicago Teachers Union since 2010 and as the union, building alliances with parents and community groups which manifested in popular support for strikes in 2012 and 2016. Among the many local US teacher groups inspired by CORE, the most established are the Movement of Rank and File Educators (MORE) within New York City's United Federation of Teachers (discussed in Chapter 5) and the Caucus of Working Educators in Philadelphia. Together with many smaller groups, they formed the national US United Caucus of Rank and File Educators (UCORE), which meets at Labor Notes conferences and online over Skype.

Less well known among the many accounts of the emergence of CORE, is its early inspiration from Mexican and Canadian teachers. This case of grassroots teachers sharing ideas and strategies across North American borders for organizing is recounted here. In a fascinating network ethnography (Ball & Junemann 2012), McAlevey (2016) explains how CORE co-founder Jackson Potter, then on a sabbatical from high school teaching, was encouraged by education professor Pauline Lipman to attend the 2006 conference of the Trinational in Oaxaca, Mexico. There he was inspired by the idea of forming a caucus of similar minded teachers to transform their union. He met activists from the CNTE, and by McAlevey's account, was especially encouraged by a meeting with Alex Caputo-Pearl, leader of a left caucus within the United Teachers of Los Angeles who was later elected its president. Also influential was Jinny

⁶⁹ I attended Labor Notes conferences in Detroit in 2008 and 2010, and in Chicago in 2012 and 2016, and participated in workshops and caucus meetings for teachers. These meetings grew year over year to reach approximately 200 participants of the conference's over 2000 attendees.

Sims, then president of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, who delivered an inspirational speech on her union's successful illegal strike in 2005, and the extensive community organization which it required. Potter convinced other early CORE members to pool their money to fly Sims to Chicago for more in-depth strategic discussions. After CORE's union election victory, and shortly before Sim's election in 2011 to the Canadian parliament with the New Democratic Party, she returned to speak at a conference gathering US teacher activists seeking to replicate CORE's success. Maria de la Luz Arriaga spoke on behalf of the Trinational and the Mexican teachers' movement.⁷⁰

The historical development of teachers' unionism in North America over the 20th Century demonstrates significant national and subnational (state or provincial) divergences on the basis of political, cultural and economic contexts. It also presents convergences, as with the economic downturn of the late 1970s through 1980s and the emergence of neoliberalism, for placing teachers' unions in all three countries on the defensive. Likewise, as has only been suggested here and will be explained in far more detail in the case study chapters, a shared hallmark of neoliberal governance has been the centralization and scaling up of education systems. Above all, in all three countries one of the most significant activities of teacher unions has been negotiating the dynamics of professionalism and the form of their members' work. Finally, as centres of governance, New York, Mexico City and Toronto share important similarities within their regional or national contexts as sites for the development and diffusion of education policy, liaising with important multilateral actors like the OECD and UNESCO.

⁷⁰ Personal observations from attending CORE conference in Chicago, July 2011.

The experiences of the Trinational Coalition and CORE demonstrate how teachers' movements in North America increasingly consider strategy and build relationships at a transnational, continental scale, despite the apparently geographically limited primary sites of their struggle at the municipal and at most the national level. This is also demonstrated by the prioritization placed by Juan Díaz de la Torre's SNTE on international endorsements in the context of his leadership's weak legitimacy. It suggests a similar concern on the part of Enrique Peña Nieto's government. Nevertheless, for those concerned with making teachers' unions more democratic, effective and radical, it is heartening to see how cross border networking is becoming increasingly accessible and no longer limited to small numbers of top level leaders.

Chapter 5: New York City

5.1: Preface- Visiting a Small High School on the Upper West Side

I met Jen, an untenured history and special education teacher with six years experience, on her preparation period at the entrance to her high school on Manhattan's Upper West Side.⁷¹ The large building had formerly been one school enrolling over two thousand students. Citing high crime and low standardized test scores, it was closed in the late 2000s and converted to house small schools of around 400 students on each of its four floors. "If anyone asks, just say you're a friend of mine from college," she says as we pass by metal detectors and the security desk. In New York's complex 'school choice' system, middle school children must apply to several high schools without recourse to a default 'neighbourhood school.' Around a third have an enrolment prerequisite ranging from high marks in grade 8, an entrance exam, or an essay and extensive interviews with the child and their parents. Jen's school requires none of these, giving priority to children whose parents attend an information night and live within Manhattan. Over two thirds of the students are Latino, around a quarter are black, about 1 percent are white. The students come overwhelmingly from poor families in the Washington Heights area.

She leads me to the drama space, where according to Jen, our interview will be undisturbed due to the lack of any drama classes. "The small school movement ruined everything," she says, citing a program begun by progressive New York educators in the 1980s to convert some of the city's most problematic giant high schools into smaller institutions where students would be less likely to fall through the cracks and teachers would have a democratic voice in its operations. Beginning under Mayor Giuliani and accelerating dramatically under

⁷¹ The experiences of 'Jen' and 'Karen' (both pseudonyms) are drawn from interviews and a school visit by the author with New York Teachers 13 and 14 in April 2015.

Bloomberg in the 2000s with a new mission, the program closed dozens of large schools and opened hundreds of small schools. She explains:

[the closed big school] was notoriously bad. There was a lot of crime... But they did have any club you could imagine. They had an award winning orchestra, a fully developed sports program. They had a huge staff and a huge student body to support these programs. By closing it now, we don't have arts at our school. We have one arts teacher who was leftover and she does a couple classes for two different schools here, but only a few. The kids don't get to choose their classes here either at all. They have zero input in what they get placed. So we've got this dance teacher giving arts credits, arbitrarily getting students assigned to her class. Then they get arts credits through the creative writing English classes because we don't have arts teachers. There's no arts programs. There's a room full of instruments that are just collecting dust and falling into disrepair. Hundreds of instruments and a beautiful auditorium no one ever uses because no school has the resources to support a band program.

Unable to offer a broad curriculum beyond the core subjects that students must study to pass their Regents exams and graduate, or even substantial extracurriculars, these small education ecosystems are then subject to varying pedagogical regimes at the behest of their administrators.

"This school was maybe started six years ago, by a 29 year old principal." Jen continues:

She just tested all these different radical pedagogical theories one after another. It was just drastically changing every year... it's become a laboratory for different models of teaching. The most recent, last year we had a new principal... who implemented this curriculum model, Learning Cultures, which is school-wide. Every teacher's required to do it in their class. It dictates how classes should run. Very specific guidelines for teachers and for students. It's supposed to be the opposite to a script. The idea behind is that teachers don't need to teach content, because content is freely available on the internet now. So we're supposed to teach kids strategies of how to learn. So, what it looks like is, I taught history, we basically give the kids a list of what they need to learn, some websites they can use to access it, some textbooks, and we tell them to go work together and learn it. Which is really beautiful in theory, but in practice, it looks like a mess.

'Learning Cultures' is the product of a professor at a New York university who is seeking to develop and market this pedagogical form, according to Jen. The academic, a friend of the school

principal, receives royalties from its use and is paid from the school budget to train the staff on its usage:

There's no direct instruction. 70 minute periods, a ten minute lesson. We're not supposed to teach content in the lesson, just, they call them 'grassroots lessons' which is: 'I saw this student do this really good strategy yesterday. She used this website and found this video and wrote notes on the video. You all should use this strategy.' Just different skills that we see the kids doing. We're not really allowed or supposed to mandate anything really. The idea is the kids are supposed to have autonomy. We don't assign seats. There's a lot of really good things about it, but... there's a lot of pushback among the students and the staff.

Without sufficient instruction from teachers, the students struggle:

[t]he lack of structure is overwhelming for them, especially because the students we get are struggling. On average, we have a third grade reading level here. Attendance is an issue. A lot of them don't know what they're supposed to be doing, and then once we tell them what they're supposed to be doing, it's just too much for them to handle without more direct instruction.

According to the 2013-14 'School Quality Snapshot' prepared by the NYC DOE, less than 30 percent of this school's teachers would recommend their school to parents. The city average is 76 percent. However the proportion of parents 'satisfied' with the education their child receives here is just below the city average of 94 percent. By the end of grade 9, the proportion of students with enough completed course credits to graduate within the standard four year period was well above the city average of 83 percent. By the end of 10th grade, it dropped nearly 30 points, well below the city standard.

Everything we do has to fit within this rigid mold of Learning Cultures. So, it's not just a 'free for all' like it sounds. The cornerstone of the model is what's called unison reading, choral reading, where the kids have to sit in groups for 15 minutes and read out loud. There's rules about it, and the way the teacher should act. So that has to happen in every class. Then the teacher spends their time doing individual conferences with each student. Especially in the history department, we have to prepare them for the Regents Exam.

Jen compares her experience at this school to the middle school in the South Bronx where she began her career several years ago, lessons there were highly scripted and paired with a “very militant” student discipline regime emphasizing quiet and straight lines. She says the commonality to these divergent pedagogies, was an underlying belief by the school administration, “that teachers cannot be trusted as professionals to use their professional judgement in how to educate kids.” She adds:

There’s been a lot of pushback in the history department because our inclination was to teach the content and lead students in discussion about the content and guide them to interesting things to read about it. But we were told that was too teacher directed. I was in the history department for the first semester. My background is in humanities and I’ve only ever taught English and history, but because I’m Special Education certified, I’m technically certified to teach anything. So I made my opinions pretty loud about how I felt this was working in history, because our assessments were showing our kids weren’t learning anything. It was really painful everyday to not be able to do the things we as professionals know work. ...with two days notice at the start of the second term, the principal pulled me into her office... she said, ‘I’m switching your entire program, you’re teaching all math classes.’

Jen is unequivocal that she was the subject of retaliation by her principal for her outspoken stance on the mandatory teaching structure used at her school. At this point we are joined in the drama space by Jen’s colleague Karen, an English teacher for 12 years with tenure, who transferred to this school three years ago. Both feel they are being pushed out of the school because they haven’t “drunk the kool-aid.” After having previously received ‘Satisfactory’ ratings under the NYC DOE’s former system of Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory annual evaluations, last year in 2013 for the first time, Karen was rated ‘Developing’ under the new four level system, and her movement up the pay grid was frozen.

I asked about the school’s union chapter and its response to these erosions to teachers’ professional autonomy. Both note that less than a quarter of the young staff have the full ‘tenure’

protection of their union, gained after four years and the evaluation of a 'portfolio' with samples of student work by a superintendent. Karen has the most years of teaching experience in the school. The only other with more than ten years is the chapter leader, who Jen describes as "very vocal in defence of teachers' rights." Jen warns, a strong perception exists among the untenured staff that being seen talking with her will result in some form of retaliation from the administration. The school union leader is also the only remaining teacher of colour on the staff of around 40. According to Karen, over the past two years, five other high seniority black women were fired or forced out after receiving low ratings, despite previously receiving good scores. Ken and Jen describe it as racist. The women had refused to adopt disciplinary methods they felt were inappropriate for their students, and were generally critical of the administration. Their replacements were young and white, and accepted the explanation that they had replaced 'bad' teachers. Jen sums up her future prospects:

I don't have tenure, but I just can't keep my mouth shut. And I'm not going to get it. She [the principal] extended it [probationary status] twice, even though I got heaps of data which shows I know how to do my job. Most people just keep their mouth shut, which is the wise thing to do if you want a career here.

Before her prep period ends, Jen leads me on a quick tour of the rest of the building. Climbing the stairs, we encounter a very different school. Unlike Jen and Karen's, its entrance requirements are difficult and highly competitive. Students come from a wide area, but are overwhelmingly white. A bulletin board in the hallway boasts of the universities which the grade 12 students will attend next year. Another board displays formulas drawn by students in an advanced algebra class. Another floor up we reach an elementary charter school. A class marches by in a silent, orderly column, students wearing formal uniforms, hands in their pockets. Next to

each classroom door is a roster of the students, ranked according to their test scores. Students with low scores have red dots beside their names. The classes are named after the alma mater of their teacher and the expected year of graduation of the students. The teachers all look young. The corridors are clean, with shiny new motivational posters on the wall and words on the floor. I feel like I'm in a school vertically segregated by race and class, with various forms of neoliberal experimentation underway. As I leave, I read a notice on the outside door for the parents of grades 3 and 4 students taking the New York State math exams for three days that week: "If your scholar arrives after 7:30 am they are late!"

5.2: Introduction

Jen and Karen's school exemplifies the outcomes of neoliberal education reforms in New York City in the early 21st Century. This chapter demonstrates how contemporary reforms have resulted in the loss of teachers' professional autonomy and the degradation of their work in the city schools, and how this process connects to both the mobility of neoliberal policy and shifting scalar struggles over political power. I will first explore structural-institutional changes that have affected teachers' work, and that have facilitated subsequent policy changes. These begin with the implementation of Mayoral Control under Michael Bloomberg in 2002 and the dissolution of elected community school boards (section 5.3). This is followed by the scaling up of the original 'small schools movement' as the New Century Schools Initiative⁷², which in conjunction with increased standardized testing, sought to multiply the quantity of NYC high schools, while removing the option of a 'default' neighbourhood school, to create a marketplace for 'school

⁷² Actually begun under his predecessor Mayor Giuliani, but expanded at a massive and rapid scale under Bloomberg (Hantzopoulos and Tyner-Mullings 2012).

choice' (section 5.4). As at Jen and Karen's school, the small faculty made the delivery of curriculum beyond the five core subjects tested under the Regents Exams difficult, but with the emphasis on these test scores, the loss of arts, languages, physical education and other electives has not apparently been deemed a serious shortcoming by education authorities -at least at the state level under Governor Cuomo. Instead, teachers in these hundreds of small worksites would compete through test score results with their colleagues across the city to enrol and retain students. However in practice, in terms of teachers' work and professional autonomy, small schools have had the most impact where they have increased the importance of standardized testing, and by generating a negative institutional influence on union culture.

Failure in this 'market' would bear grave professional consequences through subsequent policy changes. Section 5.5 reviews policies that have weakened the school site union presence, facilitating attacks on teacher professionalism. These include the elimination of seniority in 2005 for teachers at closed or downsizing schools, and the decentralization of staff budgets to school principals, creating strong incentives for retention and hiring of low seniority, lower paid teachers. Procedural changes to the awarding of tenure, resulted in an increase in the difficulty and time for new teachers to gain full job security, which when combined with increasing teacher turnover, has quickly lead to a rising proportion of untenured faculty in most New York City schools, who lack basic union protections.

Section 5.6 will look at how since the election of progressive leaning mayor Bill De Blasio in 2013, the initiative in neoliberal education policy has 'scaled up' to Governor Cuomo. The latter has directly confronted and frequently defeated attempts by the mayor to reduce the

emphasis on standardized testing for student and teachers, rollback the expansion of charter schools, and otherwise mitigate aspects of the education ‘market’.

Section 5.7 focuses on the expansion of student standardized testing initially under Bloomberg in 2002 within the context of federal No Child Left Behind legislation. It was subsequently expanded in 2010 under New York State Governor Cuomo with Value Added Assessments based on student test scores to determine teacher evaluations as part of the state’s successful bid for President Obama’s Race to the Top funding program. This punitive system created a powerful impetus for inducing ‘teaching to the test.’ Particularly when combined with changes by the state government to the weighting of annual teacher evaluations in 2015 to give roughly half the value to state test scores. I conclude this section with a brief study of the rising ‘opt-out’ movement in 2015, which in the face of tepid union opposition to standardized testing and its related reforms, is emerging as the most important form of resistance to the edifice of neoliberal education policy and the degradation of teachers’ work in New York.

In the final section of this chapter (5.8), I conclude by presenting the voices of teacher activists on how these policies have cumulatively affected their union at the school level, and its affect on their professional autonomy. This discussion will introduce the emergence of the activist left wing caucus within New York City’s United Federation of Teachers (UFT), the Movement of Rank and File Educators (MORE).

5.3: Structural Changes I: Centralizing Power to Facilitate Neoliberal Fast Policy - Mayoral Control

Since the founding of the publicly funded secular ‘Free Schools’ in the early 19th Century, New York City public education has been transformed repeatedly by waves of reform.

Irish Catholics, elite reformers, corrupt Tammany Hall politicians, New Dealers and civil rights activists have alternately sought with greater or lesser success, to decentralize the US's largest school system into various forms of local boards, or centralize the system into the hands of the mayor and his appointees (Ravitch 2000a). Prior to the start of Bloomberg's mayoral term, the form of the New York City Board of Education (BOE) had been constituted by the state government in 1969, in response to demands by civil rights activists (and to a lesser extent by pockets of schools where predominantly white parents resisted busing that would lead to integration) for greater 'community control' of local schools.⁷³ Largely in continuation with post-Tammany Hall reforms,⁷⁴ the central BOE consisted of seven members appointed jointly by the mayor and the five borough presidents. The BOE appointed the system's chancellor, set overall policy and supervised system operations, and was directly responsible for the city's high schools, as well as ESL and Special Education programs (significantly expanded from the late 1970s). However, 32 geographically defined Community School Districts (CSDs) enjoyed substantial autonomy to set budgets and priorities for their elementary schools. They were presided over by locally elected trustees, who appointed their superintendents. Despite strong initial parental involvement in the CSDs, by the late 1990s, Fullan and Boyle (2014: 22) described a third as being well-run, a third as mediocre insofar as they did not sufficiently acknowledge and address problems in their schools, and the remaining third as "characterized by patronage and corruption." The best CSDs, as measured by high school graduation rates and elementary math

⁷³ The divisive conflict in 1968-69 between an experimental 'community controlled' board in the Oceansville-Brownsville district of Brooklyn, which attempted to fire teachers appointed to its schools, and the UFT which waged months long strikes in this district and citywide in their defence, was discussed in Chapter 2.

⁷⁴ The capacity for local boards to be used as sites for corruption and patronage by district party machines was reduced by moving most financial and management powers to the central BOE office (Ravitch 2000a).

and literacy test scores, as well as by their clean and effective governance, were overwhelmingly located in gentrifying and affluent, mostly white regions of Manhattan, Queens and Staten Island, while with few exceptions, the worst were in the city's low income predominantly black and Latino neighbourhoods in Harlem, the South Bronx, Central and Eastern Brooklyn (Ravitch 2000a; Fullan & Boye 2014: 22). However where it functioned, this structure did provide opportunities for strong parental, and indirectly, teacher voice over the operations of their schools.

Near the end of his final term, Giuliani vented his frustration with the BOE's administration by exclaiming that he wanted to "blow up" the board's headquarters in Brooklyn.⁷⁵ For proponents of neoliberal education policy as well as for many exasperated with the status quo, the implementation of mayoral control offered a *shock doctrine* (Klein 2007) style potential for systemic transformation. A strong chancellor, politically backed by a powerful mayor, responds to a widely perceived institutional crisis by rapidly blasting through bureaucratic obstruction to make the hierarchy accountable -superintendents and principals, as well as teachers and perhaps implicitly, though they were not placed in the same group in the language of reformers, the students themselves.

Mayoral Control can also be conceived as an example of *fast policy* in the sense developed by Peck and Theodore (2015), for its rapid proliferation across the US by neoliberal 'thought leaders' who presented it as an *experimental* 'idea that works' to policy makers looking for 'solutions' to the perceived crisis of public education. Chicago is the commonly recognized

⁷⁵ Unlike Bloomberg's administration, under most of which Joel Klein served as chancellor, enjoying strong support from the mayor, several chancellors led the Board of Education under Giuliani; despite their varying ideologies and organizational priorities, all ultimately clashed with him (Rivera-McCutcheon 2012: 26).

point of origin for the contemporary form of Mayoral Control from its implementation in 1995.⁷⁶ Then mayor Richard M. Daley widely promoted it as a governance model while president of the US Conference of Mayors in 1997, and was put in the spotlight by President Clinton's State of the Union addresses in 1998 and 1999 (Shipps 2009: 118).⁷⁷ From Chicago, Mayoral Control spread to Boston in 1996, Cleveland in 1998, Detroit in 1999 (subsequently reversed in 2004 amidst controversy), Harrisburg in 2000 and New York City in 2002 (Henig 2009: 23). However among these cities, New York subsequently emerged along Chicago (and DC from 2007-10⁷⁸), as the premier policy model. Teachers College at Columbia education policy professor Jeffry Henig contends, "When new mayors in other cities make a pitch for gaining authority over the schools, they are as likely, or more so, to name New York as their model as the other cities." (2009: 22)

The prominence of these three cities as policy models has much to do with the political and economic importance of their school systems at the national scale, giving experiments in charter schools, standardized high stakes testing and reductions in teacher job security, a broad audience among would-be emulators and opponents alike. For advocates of neoliberal education policy,

⁷⁶ However Mayoral Control itself is not a new policy -it was the dominant form of urban school administration in the US at the turn of the 20th Century, prior to reforms demanding decentralization in favour of greater parental and community voice. It was never abolished in Philadelphia, Baltimore, New Haven or Jackson, Mississippi, among other cities (Henig 2009: 23), but none are prominently cited as policy models for Mayoral Control, likely due both to the greater prominence of New York and Chicago, and because the historic institution of Mayoral Control in these cities is not an integral component for policy advocates of a larger package of contemporary neoliberal reforms, which this chapter seeks to establish is the case for New York.

⁷⁷ Mayoral Control was not a genuine innovation in the mid nineties Chicago context. Aside from 1989 to 1994, Chicago mayors have appointed the school board, its superintendent and intervened in education policy. Exercise of this power and in some periods, control over the education budget, was an important source of the political patronage, notably for Richard M. Daley and his father, for which Chicago's municipal politics are (in)famous. In 1988, community activists won the creation of strong elected local school councils with the power to hire and fire the principal, set school priorities and approve the discretionary budget. Elected district structures and nominating committees for the central board were abolished with the return to mayoral control in 1995, but the empowered local school councils remain, though highly contested (Shipps 2009: 118-120). The charter schools which have replaced dozens of Chicago public schools over the past two decades lack this structure, giving principals considerable power and removing a check on the central appointed board.

⁷⁸ During the reign of charismatic policy advocate and schools chancellor Michelle Rhee.

implementing mayoral control weakens the capacity of teachers' unions and parent's groups to oppose these subsequent projects by insulating key decision making from popular pressure. Mayoral control facilitates neoliberal fast policy by curtailing the powers of democratically elected school boards, enabling policies from city hall, the state capitol or the White House to be more easily and rapidly implemented locally.

In *When Mayors Take Charge: School Governance in the City*, published to analyze the first seven years of mayoral control in New York City under Bloomberg and intervene in debate on the (successful) proposed renewal of Mayoral Control in 2009⁷⁹, editor Joseph P. Viteritti contends:

Before the 2002 implementation of mayoral control, New York had one of the most ambitious systems of political decentralization in the country. Yet for more than thirty years, turnout rates in community school board elections had not exceeded 10 percent of the eligible voters and were usually much lower. Candidates were largely anonymous.⁸⁰ (Viteritti 2009: 8)

The result, according to Viteritti, was that CSDs did not represent the genuine democratic will of their local constituent parents, and that in practice they were easily “captured” by highly organized groups including anti-poverty activists, resident's associations and in particular, the teachers' union⁸¹. Adhering to a particular theory of representative democracy that eschews collective organization, Viteritti argues that a strong mayor better represents the popular will,

⁷⁹ The book contains a preface by then Public Advocate of New York City Betsy Gotbaum, who laud's the collection's contribution to the contemporary debate, emphasizing its relevance to contemporary policy making.

⁸⁰ In Toronto, becoming a trustee has traditionally been the first step for would-be politicians to become elected to higher (and better remunerated) office as a city councillor, or a member of the provincial or federal parliament, drawing many ambitious candidates into the race.

⁸¹ This is a common argument among neoliberal advocates for mayoral control, see: Frederick Hess and Olivia Meeks, “Rethinking District Governance,” 107-129 in *Education Governance for the Twenty-First Century*. Eds. Paul Manna & Patrick McGuinn. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution. Hess is the director of education policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute. Shipps repudiates this claim of teachers' unions hijacking local school boards in her essay on Chicago's experience for *When Mayors Take Charge*, (2009: 137).

given a mandate by a much higher voter turnout rate, and greater media exposure leading to increased accountability (Viteritti 2009: 8). Henig contends in the same volume that mayoral control facilitates the enactment of policies that may be locally unpopular or adverse for teachers and other education workers:

Mayors, chosen citywide in elections that engage a broad array of groups and interests, are structurally less dependent than school board members on teachers unions, which can wield tremendous influence in the generally low-visibility, low-turnout elections that typically select school boards. That, in theory, gives them a freer hand to engage in a range of administrative strategies that many believe are conducive to more efficient and effective use of government resources -including closing schools, contracting out for key functions, and bargaining more aggressively to limit teacher work rules and tenure protections. (Henig 2009: 25)

Henig goes on to cite ineffective textbook distribution to explain DC school chancellor Michelle Rhee's initial desire for more power over personnel in 2007 under Mayoral Control. He acknowledges concerns of parents and teachers in DC, particularly African-Americans, who have felt excluded from exercising a political voice, and see Mayoral Control through a racial lens of a white power structure asserting control over educators and the black grassroots (2009:28). A year after the publication of this book, Rhee's appointee, Mayor Adrian Fenty, lost his reelection bid (and with it, her job) in large part due to her divisive attacks on teachers' collective bargaining rights and school closures in black communities (Ravitch 2013: 286). As Kretchmar contends, Mayoral Control is driven by an ideology that sees corporate business management principles as applicable to public education (and the public sector more broadly) in order to enact greater 'accountability', though ironically while reducing opportunities for substantive democratic participation by those who actually work and study within the system, as their perspectives and desires may contradict those of the top down reformers (Kretchmar 2014: 5).

Wong, also an economics professor, adds in Viteritti's volume that Mayoral Control can thereby counteract demands for increased education spending, and in fact make budget cuts under the pressure of fiscal austerity. Here, he describes the particular origins of public sector austerity in New York City in 1975, which subsequently emerged in other big US cities, and sets it within an ideological convergence that has made the education policies of urban Democrat and Republican administrations remarkably similar:

From a broader institutional perspective, city hall is likely to apply fiscal discipline and accountability to the school system in both formal and informal ways. During the late 1970s and the 1980s as well as the early years of the present decade [2000s], when cities faced severe fiscal stress, mayors began to adopt a new governing culture, which may be characterized as the new fiscal culture... Growingly responsive to concerns of taxpayers, these mayors move away from policies defined by traditional party labels and organized interest groups. In local governance that adopts this new culture, the traditional party labels become less relevant as the relation between social and fiscal issues weakens. Fiscal responsibility and social conservatism are no longer strongly linked. In reforming management of agencies, mayors who adopt the new fiscal culture accelerate contracting out, hold down taxes, focus on management efficiency, and introduce outcome measures for periodic evaluation. These changes tend to overlap with the policy vision of civic-spirited business leaders and the taxpaying electorate. (Wong 2009: 83)

Contributors to *When Mayors Take Charge*, largely share a consensus that organized business interests are among the principal advocates for mayoral control in a given city. Viteritti writes, "A reading of the professional literature... reveals certain patterns that are evident in the politics of school governance. Whenever and wherever mayoral control of the schools was implemented, it was usually done with the strong support of business leaders." (Viteritti 2009: 7) Their objectives are disputed. Viteritti appeals to schools needing to produce graduates better suited to the labour market, a discourse dominant in education policy since publication of the *Nation at Risk* report in 1983 (Ravitch 2013: 10; Kuhn 2014: 33-34) to continue, "The latter have a clear stake in education. Good schools are a prerequisite for a business-friendly environment. An

educated population is essential for a skilled workforce.” (Viteritti 2009: 7) The above quote by Wong, indicates a strong interest for business elites in obtaining reduced taxes thanks to a friendly mayor running the school board, also crediting the implementation of mayoral control in Chicago in 1995 with improving that city’s bond rating from BBB- to A- two years later (Wong 2009: 83).⁸² For Wong, the imperative for ‘fiscal discipline’ to serve ‘taxpayers’ and business leaders, implicates an aggressive stance to teachers and other education workers whose wages and salaries comprise by far the largest component of education budgets:

...education mayors are becoming more strategic in prioritizing their resource allocation and management. Central to this strategy is the notion of fiscal discipline in constraining labor costs. We see this in the inverse relationship between mayoral control and expenditures. Education mayors, while continuing to partner with labor unions, seem able to leverage cooperation (or concessions) from the school employees’ unions. (2009: 82)

The experience of Mayoral Control in New York City under Bloomberg largely confirmed this claim.

Fullan and Boyle (2014) divide the education history of Bloomberg’s mayoralty into two periods, both dominated by major structural reforms with a significant impact on teachers’ work. The first period from 2002-2005 at the start of his tenure, is characterized by centralization. From February to March 2002, a high profile committee reassessed the organization of the Board of Education. It heard testimony from the BOE chair and Bloomberg, recommending its dissolution and restructuring under Mayoral Control. It subsequently voted to do so, promptly receiving approval from the State Assembly. Bloomberg took control of the city’s new

⁸² Education professor Kirst cites the Chicago experience of mayoral control to argue business lobbyists were principally interested in exercising fiscal discipline over schools. She suggests they were less successful in doing so in Boston, a system which shared the top-down control of Chicago (and later New York), but in which high level career civil servants played a stronger role (Kirst 2009). In contrast, Wong praises the practices in Chicago (and subsequently in New York) of Mayoral Control resulting in the importation of management staff from outside the public education sector, who apparently share a mindset with business leaders (Wong 2009: 83).

Department of Education (DOE) in July 2002 (Traver 2006: 502). As with the other two cities with the highest profile mayoral control regimes associated with neoliberal education reform, Chicago and DC, Bloomberg used his new power to directly appoint the chancellor by selecting a non-educator, Joel Klein, a federal Department of Justice lawyer and corporate CEO, who like Rhee and Chicago's Arne Duncan, would become an important policy advocate. The new 13 member Panel for Education Policy (PEP) appointed by the mayor, plus one individual from each borough president, may not appear to be substantially different from its preceding seven member appointed structure, however the larger PEP included a clear majority of mayoral appointees. Bloomberg actively intervened to ensure the PEP approved his initiatives (New York Teacher 10: Interviewed Apr. 2015). In a high profile incident in 2004, he earned the ire of parent activists by removed three panel members who threatened to vote against holding back grade 3 children who were well below reading level. According to Fullan and Boyle, this contributed to public opposition that began stalling his initiatives in his third term. During this period, the PEP vowed to raise test scores by forcing through a single citywide literacy and math curriculum, previously used in Manhattan's District 2. The initiative drew resistance from many teachers who argued it removed the capacity for professional judgment in assessing the best means to teach their students. Traver (2006) describes the homogenizing initiative as reminiscent of the Scientific Management labour deskilling principles of Taylorism. It was soon abolished after its content received criticism from the US DOE (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 26, 28-29; Traver 2006: 502-507). Bloomberg and Klein's efforts would have become obsolete a few years later in any case, with the implementation of Common Core.

Another key structural change was the elimination of elected Community School Districts, which previously gave active parents a degree of power comparable to Chicago's local school councils. Their public face was replaced by Community Education Councils, which lost the power to appoint principals and district superintendents. Authority over school budgets was increasingly transferred to principals (Traver 2006: 504; New York Teacher 2: Interviewed Dec. 2014). On the operational side, Bloomberg and his chancellors experimented with a range of structures, which from 2005 through the end of his final term in 2012, had become a highly decentralized system of 52 networks, to which schools would affiliate, with a limited association to geography. However, despite appearing to be a more horizontal system, schools in practice were increasingly under the direct control of DOE headquarters, whose new 'Office of Accountability' kept them under surveillance by monitoring test scores (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 31). The aggregate of these policies was increasing empowerment and autonomy for school principals, in relation to their teaching staff and parents. Journalist Clara Hemphill quotes a parent activist in her chapter for Viteritti's book assessing Mayoral Control, "In the old days, if a principal got off track, the district superintendent could step in. Now, we live in a world where the principals are kings and queens." (Hemphill 2009: 203). Accompanying the elimination of geographic CSDs and centralization of power under Mayoral Control, was the end of a policy enacted in 1996, that mandated school leadership teams comprised of elected parent and teacher representatives who worked with the principal to collectively establish a school's priorities and budget. Alongside empowering parents, it also represented increased recognition and scope for the exercising of teacher professionalism. Its implementation was derided by policy advocates, many gathered in an earlier effort by Ravitch and Viteritti in mobilizing policy, *City Schools*:

Lessons from New York (2000), who claimed it hamstrung principals from making fast decisions un beholden to ‘interest groups’. Like Viteritti’s 2009 work (in which Ravitch is only a contributor), it is interesting of itself as a collective representation of the ideological orientations of high profile academics working on education policy. The exhortations of several contributors of what I describe as the ‘principal as protagonist’, is one of several ideas from these volumes that would later be realized under Bloomberg. Hemphill, who also contributed to *City Schools*, articulates this belief well when she writes:

Improving the quality of principals is the single most important thing we can do to improve urban education. It’s more important than recent initiatives to decrease class size or to provide universal pre-kindergarten... It’s even more pressing than repairing crumbling schools and buying new equipment such as computers. A good principal will make do in less than perfect conditions. But if the leadership of each building is uninspired, other efforts to improve education will fail. (Hemphill 2000: 59)

Here she joins the criticism of school leadership teams, a position she reverses following their elimination in 2007, describing it as a loss for meaningful parental engagement in her entry for *When Mayors Take Charge* in 2009, accompanied by the criticism quoted above from a parent activist.

Reflecting on Mayoral Control under Bloomberg, Hemphill writes (2009) how his new methods for parental participation, the consultative community education councils and a new paid position of a school parent liaison are not empowering as the former lacks any power and the latter reports directly to their supervisor, the principal. Hemphill argues that these policies were driven by a vision of Chancellor Klein (and Bloomberg), in which parents and students exercised their voices as consumers, free to choose and change schools, based on test score results, rather than as democratic citizens. Klein explained his opposition to giving organized

parents political voice, by describing their active groups as ‘biased’, middle class and predominantly white, unrepresentative of the majority of poor or working class parents of colour (Hemphill 2009: 203). While adding the pretensions of an equity lens, his discourse remarkably resembles comments quoted above by Viteritti and Henig (2009), who praised Mayoral Control as a means to avoid capture by ‘interest groups’. While its proponents embrace a market discourse of ‘school choice’, Mayoral Control has facilitated New York City becoming a site for experimentation in neoliberal education policy, due to the reduction of electoral means for parents and community groups to voice any opposition, and due to systemic barriers for the political participation for parents a majority of which are racialized and working class. As one NYC teacher, who also contributes to New York education website *Chalkbeat*, argues:

[C]ity kids are lab rats for the state to test out new things. The state cares about suburban parents and fights for their votes.... Those parents pay high property taxes. So their teachers are treated better because those parents don’t want to come into schools where... they have a new English teacher every year. Neither do parents in the city, but the state doesn’t care what parents in the city think. Partly they’ve frozen them out with Mayoral Control too. ... In New York, and this is true in Chicago too, part of the no political power thing is that it’s taken for granted that the city’s overwhelmingly Democratic, so nobody worries about how that’s going to affect voting. These aren’t contested terrain. But I think Mayoral Control is very important there. Because in LA... [because of] community boards... they’ve had a much harder time pushing through things like this. The union’s also much stronger in LA. (New York Teacher 2: Interviewed Dec. 2014)

These characteristics help explain why NYC, like many other major northern US urban centres, but unlike their predominantly affluent and white suburban neighbouring districts, have been particularly susceptible to the rapid rollout of neoliberal education policies.

5.4: Structural Changes II: Balkanizing the Workplace, Transforming Workplace Culture- Small Schools & the New Century Schools Initiative

Mayoral Control and a weakened parent voice facilitated the rapid rollout of a program which epitomized Bloomberg and Klein's faith in strong administrators and a marketplace of 'school choice': the closures of dozens of struggling large high schools and their replacement with hundreds of small schools with less than 500 students and 30-40 teachers (De Jesus 2012: 63). The balkanization of secondary students has had a profound impact on teachers' work. A small faculty limits capacities to offer a broad curriculum, while converging with increased emphasis on the five subject areas at the high school level tested in the Regent Exams, discussed below in the seventh section of this chapter (Shiller 2011). If arts, languages and other elective courses are no longer important for a student's graduation, then it fits well that every teacher must be timetabled into math, English, science, history or geography, because enrolment numbers and the accompanying funding don't allow otherwise. Alongside this curricular narrowing, the multiplicity of small schools puts into effect the competitive 'market' of school choice, which through the publishing of test score data, operates as a disciplinary mechanism for teachers.

As Jen described at the start of this chapter in reference to the former school in whose building her's is located, many of the large high schools that were closed did have serious problems. Most had four year graduation rates under 50 percent⁸³, and because of their huge sizes, were widely seen as places where their growing populations of at-risk students became anonymous and alienated. Many had significant problems related to crime and violence

⁸³ Though Ravitch (2013) points out, this can sometimes be a misleading statistic, as the graduation rate in five years is considerably higher. Five years was the standard in Ontario until 2003, under which I graduated in its final cohort.

(Barbanel 1993; Herszenhorn 2005). A majority were built in the early 20th Century, at a time of booming immigration, during which the BOE struggled to find seats for tens of thousands of new students every year. Because of rapidly shifting populations between neighbourhoods and a desire to save money with economies of scale, New York's high schools were constructed as large campuses several stories tall, filling most of a city block. These schools typically housed 2000 to 5000 students and a few hundred staff members. From the 1920s through to the end of the 1950s, they were widely seen to be functioning effectively, and even considered among the best schools in the US. However during this period, less than half of all youth attended secondary school, and fewer graduated (Ravitch 2000a). Classrooms and lecture halls were filled with willing students with few special needs. From the 1960s, a high school diploma became a social and an economic necessity, coinciding with major demographic and fiscal shifts for the city.

Aggarwal et al (2012), Kretchmar (2014) and many others argue that these schools were set up to fail, with a combination of a high needs population, insufficient resources and demands for steady improvement on low exam scores and graduation rates mandated under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation from 2002 (New York Teacher 2: Interviewed Dec. 2014). One may argue that New York's large high schools were structurally unable to effectively educate their students, necessitating some form of transformation. However many parents, students and teachers of these now former schools interviewed by Aggarwal and Kretchmar, contend that under mayoral control, they were excluded from these deliberations. As studied by Shiller (2007; 2009; 2010; 2011), they were replaced with the small school system advocated by Klein and Bloomberg, guided by a neoliberal ideology that many schools competing for student enrolment would inevitably lead to improvements in all, as indolent educators would be forced to work

harder to avoid losing their positions from declining funding tied to student attendance. The result has been a narrowing of the curriculum and correspondingly of professional autonomy, as teachers are pressured to raise the averages of Regent exams. For a variety of factors, principally the limited actual mobility of many racialized poor and working class students, initial research suggests teachers are more pressured by the test score cut marks than by potential or real exoduses of pupils, undercutting the claims to efficacy of the ‘choice’ mechanism. However the small schools also have an insidious effect on teachers’ professional autonomy and working conditions, for their documented tendency to both segregate the neediest students in certain schools (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 37), bereft of the necessary additional resources to effectively teach them (as indicated in Jen and Karen’s account), and through the small size of the faculty, compound the tendency towards a narrowed curriculum (Shiller 2010).

This was not the original intent of creating small schools in New York. Beginning in the late 1960s, the small schools ‘movement’ in New York was led by educators, perhaps most famously Deborah Meier, who were motivated by social justice concerns for poor and racialized youth they saw as ill served by the existing system of giant high schools (Hantzopoulos & Tyner-Mullings 2012; Shiller 2011: 164). Many shared progressive ideas (inspired by Kozol (2009) and Postman & Weingartner (1969), among others), on how schools could function far more democratically, of teachers collectively exercising their professional judgement to determine pedagogy, with far more input and relevance for students. With Meier’s leadership, the small Central Park East 1 elementary school opened in 1974, serving predominantly low income black and Latino children in East Harlem. Inspired by its success, along similar principles Meier opened Central Park East Secondary School in 1985, from which emerged 10 principles that

would define the Coalition for Essential Schools, a network of small high schools with critical pedagogy and an egalitarian structure (Hantzopoulos & Tyner-Mullings 2012: xxviii)⁸⁴.

A former UFT official who worked with the movement in the late 1980s, describes its origins:

The kids are still dropping out, and it's no longer something that is acceptable. ... [G]iven the role of race in American society and American education, disproportionate numbers of kids living in poverty are black and brown. By the 1960s, we're saying, at least aspirationally, that that's not acceptable that we would have this situation where these kids would be sent to high schools where there's no chance. So what the small school movement, in its origins was really saying was that if we organize our schools differently, and if we have schools where we really pay attention to kids, they're not warehouses, but we know the kids well. (Former UFT Official 2: Interviewed Apr. 2015)

For him, scaling schools down from a mass industrial model offered exciting possibilities for transforming traditional education, despite its subsequent co-option by programs funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation:

This is something that completely gets lost when Gates comes along, but the idea was that smallness, that scale, made certain things possible. ... [A] huge problem in our large schools were kids being kind of anonymous... So one of the notions was that in a smaller school, with a smaller number of students, every kid would be well known by at least two or three adults. Another was the notion that the school needed to operate democratically, and so in a small school you can put all of the staff around a big table in one room and they can work out their educational issues. So there's a sense of a kind of democracy. (Former UFT Official 2: Interviewed Apr. 2015)

The collective decision-making required of teachers participating in a democratic workplace would also lead necessarily to more active union chapters in these schools, he thought. In this context, to facilitate the development of distinct institutional cultures with a committed faculty, he reasoned, it would be appropriate to relinquish some clauses of the collective agreement (such

⁸⁴ Hantzopoulos & Tyner-Mullings attribute the ability of critical small schools to expand in the 1980s and early 90s to "both the centralization (and the attendant inability to supervise all parts of the system) and decentralization (creating spaces that allowed new ideas to develop) of the New York City Board of Education..." (2012: xxvi).

as subjecting teacher transfers to approval by a receiving school committee rather than seniority, or changing the structure of the school day, including the distribution of teacher preparation time), as long as it was teachers at each school site who were making these decisions. The ‘School Based Option’ was introduced to small schools beginning in the late 1980s, subject to a super-majority 75 percent vote, later lowered to 66 percent, of all teaching staff:

Schools where the adults feel empowered to make important educational decisions, that that can change outcomes for poor kids and kids of colour: not only is there a compelling educational justice case for that, but I think that really the sorts of changes that would demand of unions, are to my mind challenges. But from the way people are used to having these huge union chapters of 300 people... where you could have a small number of union activists, and therefore have a union chapter. But when you’re talking about small schools in a regional division, you’re really talking about having to pull all the teachers into the union. If you’re going to be making decisions about how you can change parts of the contract or who gets to come to your school, you need to have real teacher involvement. (Former UFT Official 2: Interviewed Apr. 2015)

For this union leader, the School Based Option exercised to develop unique small schools, was the antidote to excessively homogenizing effects of what he described as ‘industrial-style unionism’. It would also rebuke critics who claimed teacher unions drowned public education in regulation and bureaucracy that did not serve children, a charge which the UFT frequently faced from anti-union politicians, academics and pundits as the largest and arguably most powerful education union local in the US (Kuhn 2014: 8). With these understandings, he worked with Deborah Meier and other education activists to close problematic large high schools, notably Julia Richman High School in Manhattan and James Monroe High School in the Bronx, replacing each with several smaller institutions (Barbanel 1993). “What was different about this, than what happened later, was you would do at most one or two schools a year, and they were

schools where you had tried everything else before you decided you were going to close them.” (Former UFT Official 2: Interviewed Apr. 2015).

Under Mayor Bloomberg, a breakneck expansion of small schools shared only the concept of replacing big troubled schools. The how and why were completely different.⁸⁵ Recognizing the successes of existing small schools for increasing graduation rates, Bloomberg and Klein sought to dramatically scale up the experiment, receiving a \$51.2 million grant from the Gates Foundation to open 67 of them. From 2002 to 2010, 45 large and mid-size high schools (with over 1400 students), with four year graduation rates below 45 percent were closed, and replaced with a total of 207 new small schools of up to 500 students, most located in the same buildings, predominantly in poor and working class black and Latino communities in Central and Eastern Brooklyn and the South Bronx (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 35; Kretchmar 2014: 4).⁸⁶ The dramatic wave of closings and openings were presided over by a new ‘Office of Portfolio Development’. However for the mayor and the DOE, the primary rationale for dividing and multiplying schools was not spreading the advantages of smaller institutions. Many big high schools grew even larger as they took in students who did not fit in the new schools, often those who required more Special Education or ESL services, or did not have adult assistance in

⁸⁵ Michelle Fine, another early New York leader in creating critical small schools wrote, “It soon became clear that the small schools movement was being co-opted and commodified; Xeroxed and distributed across the city, with most of the key radical commitments of participation, equity, inquiry and dignity ‘left behind.’... in New York, a strategy that produced competing, overcrowded and under resourced small schools fighting with each other within the same building. ...small became the chrysalis for hatching charters, the sac for drip fed privatization into the public school system.” 2012: x).

⁸⁶ However, *Critical Small Schools* (2012) analyzes several institutions that opened during this period, like the James Baldwin School, that despite challenges, notably high turnover and pressure to focus on Regents Exam prep, maintained a social justice vision. Many are among the 27 schools affiliated with the New York Performance Consortium, a network of schools with waivers from requiring students to complete most Regents exams. In these schools, teachers report a high degree of respect for their professionalism in structures of collaborative decision-making. In large part this has been sustained by retaining veteran teachers, resulting in these schools having higher rates of seniority, and more capacity for challenging principals that go against the school’s egalitarian distribution of power (Rivera-McCutchen 2012: 30-31; Shiller 2012; Feldman and O’Dwyer 2012).

choosing a specific, specialized small school (Herszenhorn 2005; Hemphill & Nauer 2009: 2-4). Rather, creating a 'market' of schools competing for enrollment, was a key manifestation of an ideology that held education to be a tradable commodity, thus believing anti-monopoly principles from the business world would force schools to compete or perish. Activating this system was a new policy in 2004 stipulating incoming students *must* choose their high school, and could not attend their closest school by default (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 35). The neighbourhood high school was eliminated. As data materialized showing improvements in some new schools accompanied by declines in old big high schools that experienced large influxes of leftover students, Klein interpreted it using his sink or swim free market philosophy, "Some of those schools managed the challenges and some are not managing the challenges. And those that aren't, we'll have to reconstitute." (Quoted in Fullan & Boyle 2014: 37)

A New York teacher and active member of MORE completing his Doctorate in Education, explains how 'school choice' is increasingly applied across the entire K-12 system:

I'm *shopping* for a kindergarten for my daughter, and the good news is, there are a lot of great kindergartens in my neighbourhood. The problem is, that as soon as a kindergarten gets hot, everybody gets excited about what's going on in that kindergarten, then that school becomes a 'Choice' school. No longer a 'District' school. So just because I live in that district... I can't just march her into one of those. I have to apply and be selected. (New York Teacher 1: Interviewed Dec. 2014)

Unlike District schools, Choice schools can screen their applicants:

A Choice school has no obligations to any students. You have to apply, and if you get in the lottery than you're in. ... It's a geographical issue, actually, that the geographic connection between kids and a school is- they're attempting to break that. It's about breaking the solidarity between a community and a school. And I think that explains a lot of what's going on. In New York City in particular, we had some of the biggest parent movements here in the 1960s, and really intense struggles over trying to establish strong community schools and especially for black communities. And I feel like their answer to

make sure that never happens again is to rupture the link between community and school. (New York Teacher 1: Interviewed Dec. 2014)

For this activist teacher, ‘school choice’ has the outcome of making school-community organizing more difficult. Two other teachers noted the difficulties of getting parents active in their student’s school, because their far flung dispersal across the city discourages face to face meetings (New York Teachers 2 & 4, Interviewed Dec. 2014). Again, the importance of New York and other major US cities for setting precedents in neoliberal education policy:

[I]n New York City this has gone further along... In small towns where there’s like *a* high school, you’re not going to create this free market. You can do the testing and you can do certain things to weaken the union. But you can’t use these market-based reforms. In the big cities, yeah. That’s what they’re trying to do. There’s a geography to it. (New York Teacher 1: Interviewed Dec. 2014)

In the midst of this transformation, Klein boasted of the success of the initiative with a 2008 study indicating a significant 6.8 percent increase in four year graduation rates among the new small schools compared to the institutions they replaced (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 37). Another review a year later revealed this initial increase had rapidly declined (Hemphill & Nauer 2009: 2). An intensive qualitative study by Shiller (2010) of three new small schools in the Bronx questioned the extent to which higher graduation rates actually indicated an improved quality of education. From observing classes and staff meetings, and interviews with teachers and students, she determined that in fact the school’s predominantly low income racialized students were ill served by a widespread relentless focus on preparation for the five Regents exams (Shiller 2010). The pressure to teach to the test or receive a poor school rating was compounded by the relative inexperience of the teachers (the changed composition of teachers and its significance for professionalism and workplace culture will be discussed more in the following section),

aggravated by higher turnover rates. As Fullan and Boyle explain, “[T]heir inherent characteristic, being small, makes them more fragile than larger schools because they inevitably have less professional capacity. Their success is often dependent on a small, highly committed faculty, and normal turnover is more threatening than it would be in a larger faculty.” (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 37)

These characteristics of Bloomberg’s small schools also tended to create weak union chapters. Two teachers working in small high schools contended that the School Based Option praised by the former UFT official above for creating greater worker control, had actually weakened union culture at their schools. One, employed at a small school with a progressive mandate explains, distinguishing outcomes of the new small schools from the intentions of the original movement:

In these small schools, the union contract doesn’t actually work for you... everyone’s supposed to have... this many hours of this duty, but when you have a school of 15 teachers you don’t have that! ... I feel like the Small School Movement, as taken by the DOE itself, as opposed to the radical educators who worked to do it for really positive reasons, was co-opted and used as a union busting technique. Because in all these small schools, you have to hire a lot of new teachers... Over the course of the week, it all sort of evens out and it’s sorta fine. But, there’s something about like, the contract isn’t so present because you have to do all these things to make it happen, so you have these new teachers coming in who don’t really understand how a union is anyway, because union density in America is so low, most people don’t even know what the hell that means. (New York Teacher 5: Interviewed Dec. 2014)

New teachers don’t see the direct role of the union enforcing daily standards. For this teacher, despite her colleagues remaining dues paying union members as before (as statutorily required in New York State), the reduced role of the union in determining daily working conditions distances it from their awareness. Another teacher contends that School Based Options, in combination with schools overwhelmingly staffed by untenured teachers, who because of their employment

status, are unable to challenge their principals (or as the prior teacher suggests, by their inexperience may not even see a reason to do so), have become a means for administrators to increase the workload of their staff:

[i]n this environment where the majority of teachers are untenured in many schools, probably at this point hundreds of schools throughout the city... and there's just such a high rate of turnover. So like the school I worked at which was a very typical new, small school with some sort of concept behind it, you know it'd have great funding, bells and whistles come with these new schools. The union chapter leader there was always telling us not to- they'd bring this School Based Option up. We'd have this crazy schedule with only 30 minutes for lunch, we had something like four staff meetings a week. We had one that was all faculty, two before school, and then one after school. Which totally was a violation of the contract. It's great for the principals, because they'd use that time to do administrative work, essentially. So all the School Based Option in this case was used as a way to push administrative work on to the teachers, give us longer working hours, have us work this insane schedule... (New York Teacher 2: Interviewed Dec. 2014)

The result was an intensification and extension of the teachers' work day:

So the kids still got there, let's say at 8:15, we got there at 7:30, which again, is normally when I'd like to get there to set up, so it meant it was taking away from our teaching time when we'd be writing on the board, -our prep time was gone! There's been a proliferation of schools operating on these weird schedules. And the idea is that it's all for the students, but what it really is, the City's getting around the contract. (New York Teacher 2: Interviewed Dec. 2014)

He explained the role of the chapter leader, echoing the experience described by Jen and Karen of the socially isolated union representative at their school, with limited influence over a new staff eager to please the administration and ambivalent towards unionism:

[T]he person who is the chapter leader for the union is not often, but sometimes, doing the principal's bidding. Or, is sometimes totally isolated in the building because they're the only tenured teacher or one of a few, and the principal will pack that vote on the School Based Option with the teachers that are in their corner. That's what happened at the school where I worked. (New York Teacher 2: Interviewed Dec. 2014)

According to the former UFT official, the School Based Option (SBO) was subsequently negotiated in the early 2000s into being available for all high schools. One can speculate that the

extent to which SBOs are widely implemented, varies on the diverse workplace dynamics of each school. Mayoral Control created the context in which the work spaces of New York City teachers (and the learning spaces of their students) could be transformed through the rapid rollout of small schools, operating outside of union work rules, within a competitive ‘school choice’ system regulated by test score results (more on this below in the fifth section of this chapter). How this all impacted the composition of New York City teachers will be explored next in the context of policy and collective agreement changes under Bloomberg that have all contributed to shifting power relations in schools across the city away from teachers and towards increasingly empowered managerial principals.

5.5: Policies that Increase Teacher Turnover and Precariousness, Weakening the School Site Union & Teachers’ Professional Autonomy

“You cannot go after more than one or two teachers at once. There simply isn’t time.” A principal complains to economics professor Dale Ballou (2000: 100) in his contribution ‘Contractual Constraints on School Management: Principal’s Perspectives on the Teacher Contract’, for *City Schools: Lessons from New York City*, introduced in the previous section of this chapter. Another gripes on the difficulties of firing teachers through the system’s disciplinary process, “I need fifteen documented screw-ups, because some will be thrown out.” (Ballou 2000: 99) Ballou approvingly cites the opposition of his interviewees to seniority-based school transfers when he claims, “As principals have noted, it takes only one or two of these teachers to poison the atmosphere in an entire school.” (2000:95) Ballou relates the opposition of these principals to virtually every aspect of teachers’ working conditions which receives some form of

protection in the UFT collective agreement. These include: seniority based staffing (though noting only about 500 transfers occurred in 1999 for 1100 schools and 68 000 teachers), the inability of principals to unilaterally or more easily implement School Based Options, the disciplinary stages and requirements for evidence needed to terminate teachers, fixed class sizes (34 students for high school, with exemptions for Spec. Ed) and the rights of teachers to duty-free lunch breaks and self-directed prep time (Ballou 2000: 99-109). It is not uncommon to find administrators wishing to have more managerial authority in relation to the staff they supervise.⁸⁷ They find their champion in academics and policy advocates like Ballou (and other contributors to *City Schools*), who believe in the ‘principal as protagonist’ as the frontline implementors of the neoliberal policies they envision as improving public education. What is interesting about this laundry list of complaints is the extent to which so many were subsequently addressed under Bloomberg in his general effort to empower school administrators. I argue here that a large part of his success in doing so was owed to implementing labour policies which resulted in an increasingly precarious workforce subject to high turnover rates.

In this section, I contend that significant changes to the composition of NYC teachers and their employment status, namely a shift to an increasingly young workforce, with lower median years of service (suggesting higher turnover) and a much higher proportion without the job security provided by tenure, has had a fundamental impact on teachers’ professional autonomy. An increasingly precarious, short term workforce, spread over many small worksites, many with less than 30 staff, has led to weakened school level union chapters, as teachers lack the confidence, or interest, in placing themselves in a potentially adversarial position with their

⁸⁷ Though Ballou admits it was difficult to find 11 principals willing to speak critically about the contractual rights of NYC teachers, even when confidentiality was assured.

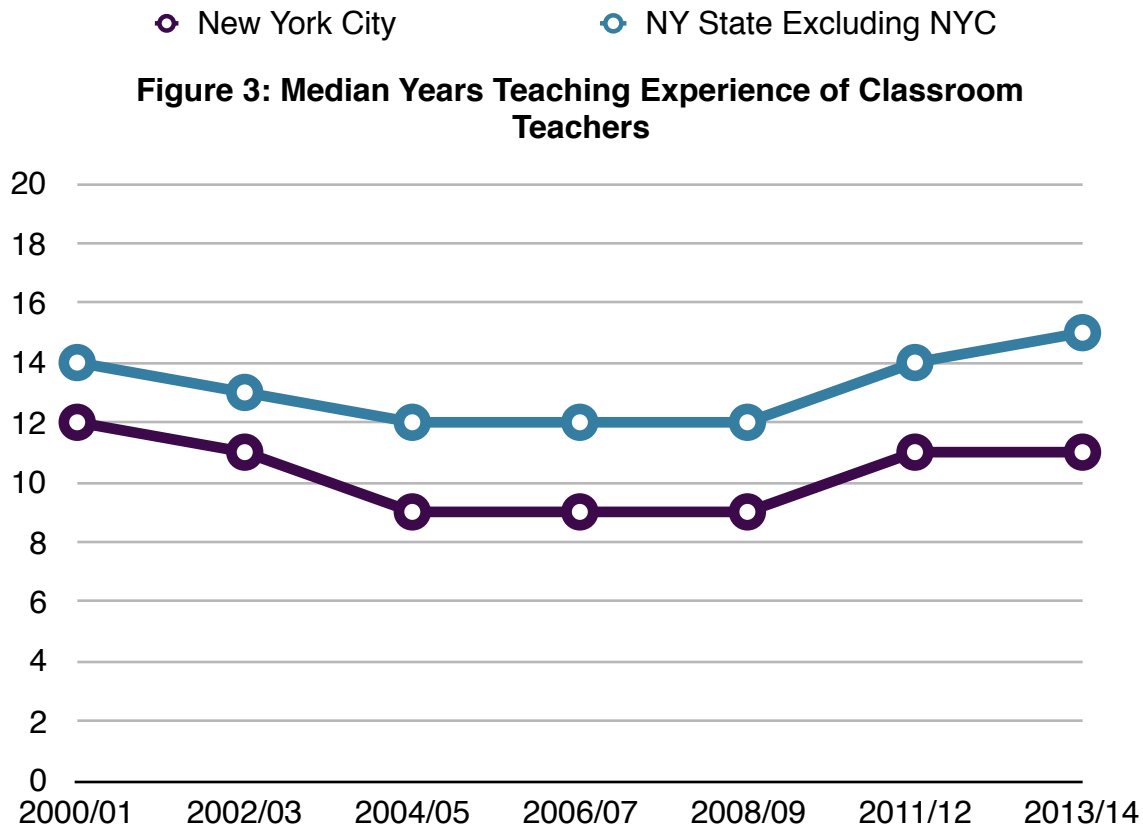


Figure 3: Median Years Teaching Experience of Classroom Teachers

school administrators. With weakened or non-existent school union chapters, administrators, as the front line managers tasked with implementing policies like raising test and exam scores at all costs -on whose effectiveness in doing so, are themselves directly judged by the DOE and the State Education Department, have greater power to implement policies like prescribed curriculum or classroom strategies. Or increasing time spent on test preparation, circumscribing teacher autonomy.

As Riegel (2003) and others have noted, and as I argued in my methodological chapter, academic and grey literature has tended to de-emphasize the teacher experience in discussions of education policy, despite their role as the ultimate enactors of much of these policies. Much of the literature discussed earlier in this section on New York is indicative of a general tendency to see school administrators and superintendents as the principal actors or subjects, to whom policy

Figure 4: New York City Teacher Age Distribution, 2013/14

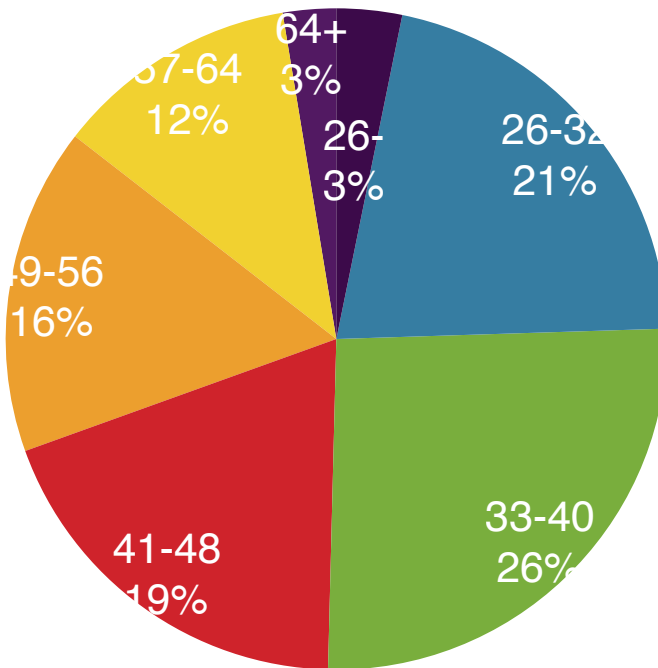
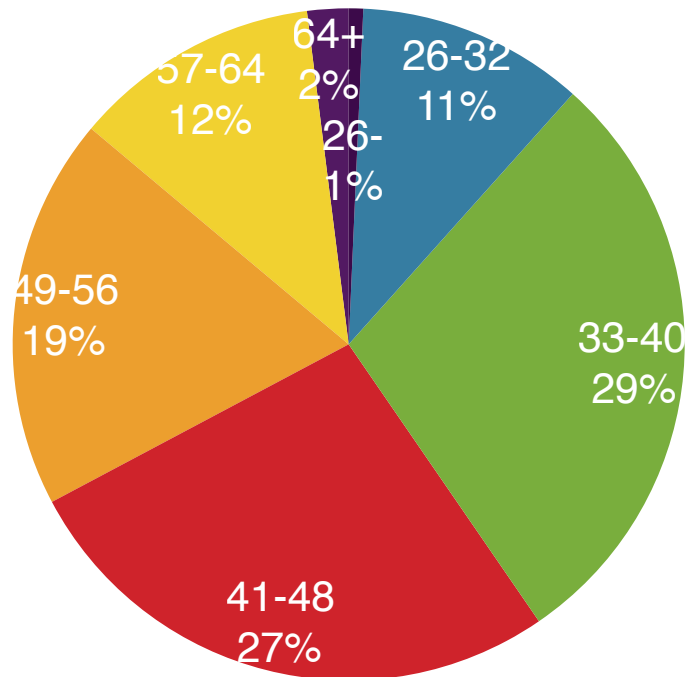


Figure 5: Nassau-Suffolk Teacher Age Distribution, 2013/14



advocates voice their appeals, with teachers (and students), as the objects upon which they act. Teachers themselves are seldom asked for comment. Exceptions are works like Kretchmar (2014), Aggarwal (2012), Shiller (2007, 2009, 2010, 2011), and Hantzopoulos and Tyner-Mullings' (2012) edited book on the experience of critical small schools in NYC. All employ an explicit social justice lens. In general analytical works like Fullan and Boyle (2014) or Viteritti and Ravitch (2000) or Viteritti (2009), there is remarkably less discussion of policy changes that directly affect teachers' work, especially through collective bargaining, than there is of changes in high level system governance.⁸⁸ More so than concerning an issue like Mayoral Control, this section in particular draws heavily on teacher accounts of changes in working conditions.

⁸⁸ An exception is (Nuñez et al 2015), accessibly written by three teachers who became professors of education. The book exhorts teachers to activism on education policy, drawing examples from the 2012 Chicago teachers' strike.

Figure 6: Median Teacher Salary 2013/14

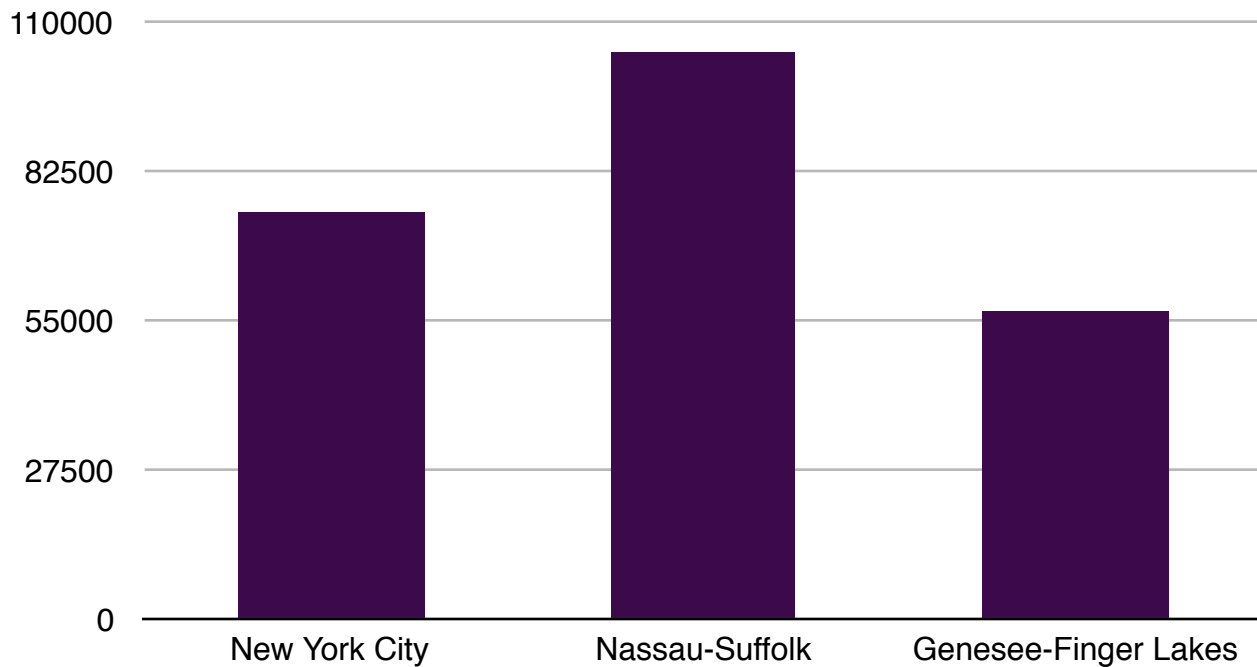


Figure 6 demonstrates the widely divergent salary ranges of teachers across New York State. Teachers in Genesee-Finger Lakes, an upstate region including the city of Rochester and some mainly rural counties, are among the lowest earners. By contrast, since the onset of province-wide negotiations in 2004, teacher salaries are uniform across Ontario. Teacher salaries vary slightly across Mexico, according to three regions defined by cost of living, with the highest areas in Mexico City and the north, and the lowest in the poor rural south. Table by Paul Bocking, using New York State Education Department data, 2013-2014.

Figures 4 and 5 demonstrates how in the 2013-14 school year, NYC teachers were disproportionately younger than their colleagues in neighbouring, predominantly affluent suburban Nassau and Suffolk counties on Long Island, with nearly double the proportion of teachers in their mid to late 20s. Nassau and Suffolk counties have proportionally far more mid career aged teachers in their 40s through mid 50s. Interestingly, both areas have comparable proportions of senior teachers in their late 50s and early 60s,

Figures
4 and 5

The 2005 collective agreement between the UFT and the NYC DOE, the only one signed under Bloomberg⁸⁹, marked a significant turning point in the composition of the teacher workforce. After years under Mayor Giuliani during which teacher salaries declined in real terms and the gap between their median compensation and those of more affluent Long Island districts grew substantially, UFT members won increases adding up to 35 percent over inflation by the end of the contract in 2008 (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 42). However, also included in the deal was the elimination of seniority placement of teachers who lose their position due to declining student enrollment or the closure of their school. Affected tenured teachers became Absent Teacher Reserves (ATRs), who like substitute teachers, were deployed full time to cover regular teacher absences, but while keeping their original salaries and benefits. In the midst of dozens of school closures and conversions to small schools, perhaps 1200 to 2000 teachers lost their access to regular positions, according to counts by a network of ATRs, who have attempted to gain recognition as a member subgroup by their union (New York Teacher 10: Interviewed Apr. 2015). An ATR teacher explains how the intersection of teaching to the five Regents exams, small schools with generalist faculties and a policy to encourage turnover at closed schools, led to many teachers becoming ATRs:

Within [large schools], it could be like a miniature university because you could have a foreign languages department with multiple language choices. Now it's largely the norm that there's only Spanish available. We used to have professional non-academic, commercial classes. Like typing, carpentry, metal work. So for the non-core academic subjects, things that are not English, Math, Science, Social Studies, there's no place for these teachers anymore. With the small schools, they've shredded these programs. ... The other part of this, is that when they close these schools, the new schools are supposed to

⁸⁹ As relations with Bloomberg worsened, the UFT leadership determined to wait out his term, though this resulted in working under an expired contract for over four years. The union signed a deal with De Blasio within months of him taking office on January 1, 2014.

take half of the staff and then shed the other half. (New York Teacher 10: Interviewed Apr. 2015)

The surviving staff are divided up among the three to four new schools that succeed the original school and then the other half are put in this pool. An interview determines who gets to stay and who has to go, “The administration is often displaced too. So there’ll be new administrators in the new schools. So this very much tied in causally with the small school factor.” (New York Teacher 10: Interviewed Apr. 2015) For the first several years, this ATR teacher described the system as relatively satisfactory (though inferior to obtaining a new permanent position) as he was placed to cover semester or year long absences, similar to a Long Term Occasional teacher in Toronto, who receives the standard teacher salary for their level of experience, and holds the full range of classroom responsibilities. However in 2010-11, the system was changed so that ATRs are now on 4-6 week rotations between schools, in which they act as daily supply teachers, or as assistants in the classrooms of other teachers. New evaluation structures were also created to assess their performance as substitutes. He contends that this change was made to push ATRs to resign (New York Teacher 10: Interviewed Apr. 2015; ATR Phenomenon 2015; Antush 2014).

Despite the removal of seniority provisions, ATRs are still able to regain their status as a regular school faculty member by successfully interviewing for a new position. However a policy change by the DOE in 2007 outside of the collective agreement, but with the consent of the UFT, discourages this from happening for teachers with higher levels of service:

There was a giant turning point in 2007, where this idea of Fair Student Funding got implemented. It gave [principals] a limited budget for hiring staff. So it gives a *huge* incentive to the principal to choose someone that’s of lower salary. The starting salary last time I checked in the \$40 000s range. Mine is over \$70 000. If you’re looking to fill three teachers, with a budget for \$120 000, you can get more teachers for your money at this

level. Now what happened in the past, was principals were allocated teacher units. That would bring in whatever number of teachers you needed regardless of salary.
(New York Teacher 10: Interviewed Apr. 2015)

As a result, principals had a strong disincentive against hiring experienced, tenured teachers to their schools, who had been surplussed through the ATR process, or through a regular transfer.

The UFT contends the 2014 contract signed with De Blasio includes a provision exempting ATR salaries from the school's average salary calculations, removing an incentive for principals to save money by not hiring higher seniority ATRs (UFT 2014). In Ontario, the number of teacher positions in a school is tied to student enrolment, with principals having no control over salary budgets, leaving no incentive for individual principals to hire lower paid teachers to their staff. A teacher currently employed at a small school further explains:

[I]nstead of all teachers being paid from the DOE, you're paid from a school budget, and so the budget each school gets is an average of all teacher salaries. And so it discourages small new schools from hiring experienced teachers because there's one teacher who taught for 15 years, so she brings the average up. Now each teacher costs more.
(New York Teacher 5: Interviewed Dec. 2014)

She argues that placement programs like Teach for America (TFA) which don't assume its recruits will make a career commitment to teaching, work well within this context of lowering costs, with consequences for union capacities, especially at small schools:

It seems to me that it's a really great way to keep costs low for paying teachers. When I came in it was like high forties... [T]hey kept it really low because the top scale is a hundred and change. So they hire enough teachers, but they only get first, second, third year teachers, because that's how they're able to afford a whole staff. So my first year at that new school, there was 70 kids, because you build year by year, you're trying to get to about 250-280. There was like three of us who were brand new Teaching Fellows or TFA people... There were a few more who were one or two years in, so a lot of inexperience. [W]e had one woman who had 15 years in the building, and another who had eight. Everyone else was under three years. That's how they built it. Part of it is budgetary, but part of it to me seemed to me this way to... nobody's tenured, a lot of them are teachers that are cycling in and passing through, they're not really committed to any union or

fairness practice among their colleagues. Especially with TFA, it's community service you do before you go to law school, so they're not actually like committed to long term equity in the school, they're there for their resumes. (New York Teacher 5: Interviewed Dec. 2014)

The NYC DOE hired 5 500 new teachers at the start of the 2015-16 school year, of which about 1000 came through the Teaching Fellows program, which like TFA, provides an intensive fast track several week long training program prior to entering the classroom, in place of holding a university degree in education (Darville & Decker 2015). Teaching Fellows complete a subsidized Masters in Education while working in the classroom. Unlike TFA, Teaching Fellows recruits individuals interested in education as a second career, resulting in considerably lower turnover. Several New York teachers I interviewed entered the profession through the Teaching Fellows. Their comments on the program were mixed as many felt considerably underprepared when they entered the classroom, emphasizing the value of conventional teacher training programs, but were happy with the program's ability to attract a diverse cohort with a serious interest in teaching. Several remarked that a divisive 'new versus old teachers' dynamic and general anti-unionism which they perceived as pervasive in TFA, were not present in the Teaching Fellows training they received.⁹⁰

TFA members employed in NYC schools have declined from a height of 536 in 2008 to 400 in 2014, and 230 in 2015, half of which were placed in charter schools (Darville & Decker 2015). TFA closed its NYC training site in 2014 due to growing difficulties in recruiting candidates. Its NYC director cited, "a contentious national dialogue around education and teaching in general, and TFA in particular." (Quoted in Darville 2014a), alluding to criticism of the limited training offered to its members, who generally do not stay in teaching. Others

⁹⁰ New York Teachers 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 12, interviewed between December 2014 and April 2015.

attributed the decline to an improving post-2008 recession US labour market for university graduates (Darville 2014a). One special education teacher I interviewed entered education through TFA. Entering her seventh year of teaching in 2015-16, she was virtually unique among her cohort for still being in the profession. She is also among the most senior of the 35 teachers at her middle school in Washington Heights (New York Teacher 11: Interviewed Apr. 2015).

However a teacher shortage identified at the start of the 2015-16 school year for many cities in the US (Rich 2015) did not materialize for NYC. Despite the large total number of new hires, it was still well below California, with 21 000 openings (and only 15 000 new teacher graduates from the state's faculties of education) (Decker 2015). However unlike California and other states and urban areas, NYC is not making up for mass layoffs during the 2008-09 recession and subsequent years of austerity. AFT president Randi Weingarten and other union activists attribute declining numbers of students entering teacher preparation programs to high profile attacks on the teaching profession by politicians like Governor Cuomo and his ideological brethren in other states. However in New York State, despite declining numbers of entrants, education graduates still overshot available new positions in 2015 by about two thirds according to the State Education Department (NYSED). While hiring at elite public schools in the city is far more competitive than for struggling schools, overall NYC appears to maintain its attraction for new teachers, with salaries well above most upstate districts (but below its suburban neighbours), and perhaps just as importantly, because of its more qualitative allure as *New York City* (Decker 2015).

A significant DOE policy change was enacted in 2010-11 which dramatically changed the way teacher tenure is granted. It has gone virtually unmentioned in published analyses of the

Bloomberg education era, but it has had a profound impact on the system's large number of newer staff according to several interviewed teachers. In Canada and Mexico, the attainment of permanent employee status for K-12 public school teachers means greater union protection under seniority-based provisions for layoffs and due process on disciplinary issues, among other rights. The word 'tenure' to describe this status as it is used throughout the US is misleading as the term is more commonly associated with the far broader rights of permanent full time university professors. In any case, the job security that tenure provides, especially as it limits the power of administrators, has an impact beyond the working life of an individual teacher, to affect the culture of the school as a whole. As one teacher said, "The last public school I taught at was great... Partly because it was overwhelmingly senior teachers. So they were tenured, they were not frightened of taking risks in the classroom, but also in terms of grieving things." (New York Teacher 2: Interviewed Dec. 2, 2014)

As a result, considerable changes were made to the tenure granting process under Bloomberg, with the outcome of it being becoming much more difficult to obtain. This has had a significant impact on institutional cultures, as the proportion of teachers working precariously for years under probation has risen. Previously, provided that a teacher received Satisfactory annual ratings by their principal during their three probationary years, they were virtually guaranteed to receive tenure by their superintendent, as they were effectively vetted by their principal. Teachers who entered the profession at this time reported obtaining tenure relatively painlessly. A teacher activist who obtained tenure under this system explained the shift:

But the big change that happened is that Bloomberg... there's Race To The Top coming from Obama, and so he wanted a more stringent evaluation system. And New York State bought into that. So the state adopted the new observation system... [E]ssentially you

apply for tenure to the Chancellor or to your superintendent, that are appointed under the Chancellor. So under Mayor Bloomberg, he just changed the policy and said to his Chancellor, who said to his superintendents, ‘Only allow 50% of the people who apply tenure to get it.’ (New York Teacher 3: Interviewed Dec. 2014)

A younger colleague joins us and adds:

I’m in my fifth year and I’m untenured. So I’ll be going up for tenure again this year. When you go through the process it just becomes supremely evident, it’s a completely subjective, arbitrary and political process. If you look at data and statistics across the City, because tenure decisions are made by the superintendent not the principals, you’ll see it’s arbitrary. So Queens has one tenure giving rate, and Manhattan has another one. (New York Teacher 4: Interviewed Dec. 2014)

He continued, “Things are changing a little bit, and the tenure rates are ticking up a little bit. A lot of that has to do with the orientation of the mayor [De Blasio] and the superintendent. But it used to be a guaranteed shot when you went up for tenure that you would get it.” (New York

Teacher 4: Interviewed Dec. 2014) He explained the post 2011 application process:

You have to submit a portfolio that has lesson plans, your observations from your principals and administrators, anything that can document contributions that you make to the school community, any leadership roles that you take. Student work, your data, your test scores for Regents exams. Your student pass rates in your classes. ... So this is a big fat binder, and then you got hundreds of teachers for each borough applying for tenure, and they’re supposed to go through these binders and then make a decision whether you should get tenure or not. So they never see you teach. (New York Teacher 4: Interviewed Dec. 2014)

This teacher had been denied tenure twice, and each time had his probationary status extended for a year by his principal. He is frustrated by the lack of feedback from the superintendent concerning his unsuccessful submissions, adding to his sense that the process is highly arbitrary. He echoes New York Teacher 5 quoted above, and New York Teacher 7, who recalls her principal refusing a suggested hire with ten years experience for being “too expensive,” and argues that low rates of granting tenure are part of an effort to have a lower paid, high turnover workforce:

It's a labour shift going on, right?... Senior, expensive veteran teachers, to that of a transient labour force. Where people like me who came in through Teaching Fellows, typically only stay for five years. Before, after five years you were vested in the pension system... Then under Cuomo, our governor, they passed a law... it's 10 years before they're vested in the pension system. So that's crucial... new teachers more generally, they're leaving after five years. In addition to that, the big pay increases in the contract, don't come until year 8. So there's a huge incentive to deny us tenure because they know that before you get to year 8, you're a cheap teacher essentially. (New York Teacher 4: Interviewed Dec. 2014)

Like New York Teacher 5, he contends that the increasing proportion of untenured teachers has a powerful impact on staff relations in the school, and on the relative strength of the union chapter.

His tenured colleague, a UFT delegate for the school and member of MORE explains:

[T]he tradition in New York is, 'If you don't have tenure, don't say anything!' You shouldn't be on any union committees. Just keep your head down. If you have a concern, you should talk to someone who has tenure... I think that it's really hurt the teachers' union movement that it is like that. There's people who are like, 'Don't sign anything, don't sign a petition, don't put your name on anything.' (New York Teacher 3: Interviewed Dec. 2014)

His untenured colleague has given up trying to maintain a reputation unsullied by labour activism, writing articles for MORE's blog and participating in conferences, "I've gone into the mode where, 'I don't give a fuck anymore.' Pretty much. Because it's not a fair process. You forced me to speak out, because your system is so corrupt!" (New York Teacher 4: Interviewed Dec. 2014) The tenure policy change increases the power of principals over untenured teachers, according to informants, who say that in addition to the absence of a publicly available rubric for superintendents to assess teacher portfolios, the endorsement of their school administrator is actually pivotal for the superintendent making this decision. Whereas tenure previously depended on successful classroom observations conducted by principals, including pre and post

observation meetings where feedback is provided, the submission of the portfolio for tenure and its approval or denial is a more mysterious process.⁹¹

A common theme throughout this chapter on New York, has been the propensity of the neoliberal education policies discussed here to increase the extent to which the characteristics and personalities of individual administrators define the working conditions of teachers on their staff. This is acknowledged both by teachers who report good relations with their principals (New York Teachers 5 and 11), and those whose experience has been mostly negative (New York Teachers 1, 2, 7, 12 and 13). These are the circumstances which give rise to laboratory-like schools like Jen and Karen's described at the start of this chapter, where top-down changes to pedagogical practices are made on a yearly basis, irrespective of teacher input, and in which their professional autonomy is substantially degraded. I will return to the effect of these policies on the school-level presence of the union and its impact for teachers' professional autonomy in the sixth section of this chapter.

5.6: Scaling up: Initiative in Neoliberal Policy Shifts from NYC to Albany

The election of progressive Democratic Mayor Bill De Blasio in November 2013 marks a major shift in the neoliberalization of public education in New York. Elected overwhelmingly, on

⁹¹ A teacher activist in Nassau County explains the contrast between high teacher turnover in NYC, and stability in the Long Island suburbs as a choice of school boards on whether to prioritize retaining teachers through adequate mentoring and good working conditions: "What you see in the City with a lot of the churning and churning out of teachers, that causes a lot of chaos. Because you're constantly having new teachers in the building. You don't have anyone who's seasoned. That really makes a huge difference. That doesn't occur in most Long Island schools. Because what happens is, if you get a job on Long Island, it's like, Mecca. When people come in, like in my district, very very rarely do you hear people not being granted tenure. They really work with teachers. I think they tend to invest in them a lot more, more so than the City does because we're more localized... I'm a mentor. In my district we have a really good mentoring program, we work really closely with our new teachers and really nurture them, and work hard with them if they're struggling. I don't think they do that in the City. So people are more likely to get tenure out here on Long Island because they're invested in." (New York Teacher 8: Interviewed Apr. 2015)

a platform centred on combatting growing inequality in the city, one of his priority areas, like Bloomberg, was education. However in seeking to redistribute public resources from the city's charter schools back to the municipally run school system, while curbing the weight of standardized test scores on the evaluations of teachers and schools, he threatened a significant part of the legacy of his predecessor. This section will discuss how in a scalar shift during the tenure of De Blasio, the initiative in neoliberal education policy passed to the state governor's mansion in Albany, occupied by Andrew Cuomo since 2010. Through utilizing the considerable constitutional authority of the state government over the City, aided by powerful ideological allies, Cuomo has succeeded in defeating many of De Blasio's most substantive education proposals. Cuomo's success in subsequently advancing the neoliberalization of public education through standardized testing and its tying to teacher evaluations will be studied in the next chapter. Here, we will first look at the initial progressive efforts under De Blasio, and then consider how the shifting of power in education policy making authority from the City to Albany creates a problem of scalar strategy for the UFT. With changes increasingly being made to the working conditions of its membership by a state government with which the union holds no formal rights to collective bargaining, the UFT must adopt a new geographical strategy, in the sense articulated by Andrew Herod in his seminal *Labor Geographies* (2001), in order to regain its leverage.

De Blasio's resounding win over centrist and right wing challengers in the Democratic primary and then his Republican challenger in November 2013, was heralded by many progressives as an opening for left-leaning urban policies, in a context where Democrat-led administrations across the country, exemplified by Chicago and Washington DC, were bastions

of neoliberal orthodoxy. In an article for news website *The Huffington Post*, ‘The De Blasio Mandate for Education’ shortly after his victory, Ravitch underlines the impact of his win on the education policy zeitgeist reaching far beyond the city, as “a major national setback for the agenda shared not only by Mayor Bloomberg, but by George W. Bush, Michelle Rhee, Arne Duncan, Jeb Bush, Scott Walker, Bobby Jindal, ALEC (the American Legislative Exchange), the Koch brothers and many others.” (Ravitch 2013b) She adds optimistically, “Make no mistake: In New York City, the drive to privatize public education has ground to a halt with de Blasio's election.” (Ravitch 2013b) Repudiating Bloomberg’s record, the education scholar urged de Blasio to reinstate default neighbourhood middle and high schools for students, dismantling the complex ‘school choice’ mechanism. She also recommended a review of the system’s principals, citing many hired with minimal qualifications under Bloomberg, and backed De Blasio’s plan to prevent charter schools from further usurping space from public schools with which they are co-located, and requiring them to pay rent and accept a broader range of students. Finally, she advocates a general rollback of his predecessor’s testing and “flawed” school accountability mechanisms, “whose sole purpose seems to be to set up schools for closure and privatization.” (Ravitch 2013b)

De Blasio moved quickly and succeeded in making some significant changes in areas that were firmly under the control of the DOE. In contrast to Bloomberg’s choices, De Blasio selected for chancellor Carmen Fariña, a school employee who had started from the classroom and risen through the ranks through her long career, and who was well regarded by the UFT and advocates outside the system for her reasonableness and integrity (Former UFT Official 1: Interviewed Jan. 2015). Several of her early policies were especially relevant to teachers’ professional autonomy.

Within weeks of acceding to the chancellorship, she changed policy to require a minimum of seven years teaching experience for new principal applicants, shifting from no minimum under Bloomberg, justified on the basis of administrator shortages in the early 2000s, and reflecting his neoliberal ideology that private sector managerial experience was more valuable than a teaching background (Darville 2014b). Extreme incidents of teacher mistreatment by administrators were more rapidly addressed, as in the case of a Bronx primary school principal pushed to early retirement after she threw her teachers' desks and cabinets to the curb in a statement against sitting while teaching (Edelman 2015). MORE activists report that Fariña is enforcing a contractual rule in the UFT agreement that principals are required to participate in monthly consultation committee meetings convened by school chapter leaders.⁹² Several teacher respondents also report that under Fariña, rates of tenure granting have slightly increased. Bloomberg's school letter grades based on test scores results, resembling the Board of Health's posters found near the entrances of the city's restaurants, were replaced with assessments based on broader criteria, downloadable from the DOE website.

In other crucial areas of education policy under his control, De Blasio chose to keep the status quo. With support from a broad based coalition of education groups, including some smaller charter school chains, he campaigned for and obtained an extension to Mayoral Control from the state legislature in 2015, arguing that the policies of his administration needed more time to reach fruition, such as the Renewal Schools program, in which 94 city schools otherwise subject to closing due to low state test scores, received additional resources and support. In a move viewed by political commentators as another example of Cuomo's antagonism towards de

⁹² Personal observations at MORE Conference, October 24, 2015, New York City.

Blasio and the influence of his other principal adversary, Eva Moskowitz, CEO of Success Academy -New York's largest charter school chain, the renewal was limited to one year rather than three, the mayor's compromise proposal after initially requesting the policy be made permanent (Shapiro 2015). Meanwhile, parent advocacy groups Class Size Matters and NYC Kids PAC criticized De Blasio for what they saw as little empowerment of the Community Education Councils and School Leadership Teams, which had lost much of their influence under Bloomberg to the chancellor and local principals, respectively. While praising De Blasio's success in stopping punitive school closures, they also charged him with not meeting his campaign goals to make the city's stratified *school choice* system more equitable. These parent groups also criticized his decision to maintain the centralization of power under Mayoral Control (Haimson & Tanikawa 2015; NYC Kids PAC 2015).

De Blasio suffered one of his largest education policy defeats by Governor Cuomo over his proposals to make student standardized test scores less punitive for teachers and schools. Two other plans overturned by Albany were the introduction of a new wealth tax to fund the citywide expansion of pre-Kindergarten classes, and reversing one of Bloomberg's final policies, curbing the further growth of charter schools by returning hundreds of millions of dollars earmarked for charter school construction back into public school funding (Weiner: Interviewed Dec. 2014). Following a \$3.6 million advertising campaign against De Blasio's anti-charter school policies in spring 2014 by the Families for Excellent Schools lobby group, high profile rallies of Success Academy pupils and staff led by Moskowitz and publicly endorsed by Cuomo, capped off by the state legislature's overruling of municipal measures to limit charters, De Blasio backed away from his efforts to curb their proliferation (Singer 2014; Hernandez 2014). Weiner (2014)

contends that the defeat of the key planks of his campaign policy on education were foreshadowed by Joe Williams, executive director of Democrats for Education Reform (DFER), an influential pro-testing and charter school think tank and lobby group affiliated with the Democratic Party, whose principal donors are Wall Street hedge funds. “The much-maligned standardized tests aren’t going anywhere,” he commented in an article in January 2014 reporting on the new mayor’s education mandate. “The Bloomberg haters are going to have to settle for a change in style rather than major changes in substance.” (Willen 2014). DFER donated \$72 000 to Cuomo in 2015 (Gonzalez 2015).

Neoliberal interventions in New York State’s K-12 education system did not begin with Andrew Cuomo. Three term Republican governor George Pataki (1995-2006) authorized the creation of up to 100 charter schools across the state in 1998, raising the cap to 250 in 2006. During the course of his tenure, he refused to increase state funding for public education, and fought against a high profile legal suit by Campaign for Fiscal Equity to raise funding for NYC schools. At Bloomberg’s urging, he led the authorization of Mayoral Control for NYC (Traver 206: 502). Nevertheless, under president Randi Weingarten, Pataki was endorsed by the UFT. A former UFT official explains some of the political dynamics behind the limits of Bloomberg’s influence in Albany:

He [Bloomberg] had to do deals with Albany, and many times he didn’t get his shit... and as a result had to do what he did. It wasn’t his personality... It’s more like you can’t fool all the people. Giuliani had a bad relationship with Albany, because he backed [former governor] Mario Cuomo. When Pataki won, everyone said ‘New York is toast!’ (Former UFT Official 1: Interviewed Jan. 2015)

Arguably Pataki’s most significant intervention in K12 education was in maintaining an overall context of fiscal austerity while Bloomberg’s administration proceeded with its agenda.

The election of a mayor with a left leaning education agenda brought substantial financial backing from pro-testing and charter school lobby groups financed by Wall Street hedge funds and major US education policy philanthropists to Andrew Cuomo, apparently recognizing Albany as a strategic bulwark for maintaining the momentum of neoliberal education policy in New York. Students FirstNY Advocacy, the Coalition for Opportunity in Education and Families for Excellent Schools, spent over \$8.3 million⁹³ lobbying state legislators to support charters in 2015. The latter alone spent \$9.7 million in 2014 (Bragg 2014). Public education activists and investigative journalists have also raised considerable publicity over \$4.8 million in political donations received up to 2015 by Governor Cuomo directly from hedge fund managers (Gonzalez 2015). His rival De Blasio remarked, “The hedge-fund contributors loom very large in Albany, and they have way too much influence; that is a fact.” (Quoted in Goldman 2015).

Cuomo rejected efforts by Fariña and the DOE to negotiate reforms with the UFT to the teacher evaluation process that would have made the process less onerous and tied to value-added metrics on standardized test scores. Over the course of 2015, he led an effort from the state legislature, assisted by the State Education Department (NYSED), to increase the weight of these test metrics in annual evaluations, while making tenure more difficult to obtain. The new will of the state government under Cuomo to aggressively formulate and roll out education policy, the details of which will be fully outlined in the following section, creates a scalar problem for the UFT and other local teachers’ unions across the state. Whereas these unions hold statutory collective bargaining rights with local school districts and under Mayoral Control, the NYC municipal government, the state legislature wields increasing power over teachers’ working

⁹³ The donors to these lobby groups are themselves not evident under New York State non-profit reporting laws, though some have been traced to conservative ‘free market’ groups (Bragg 2014)

conditions. This resembles Peck and Tickell's influential scalar analysis of the tendency under contemporary neoliberalism of senior governments to upload policy making authority in the public sector, resulting in weakening avenues for locally based dissent (2002: 401)

This scaling up of teachers' labour relations to higher levels of government follows developments in Ontario and Mexico (Sweeney 2013; Bocking 2015). However unlike these two jurisdictions in which education finance overwhelmingly originates from the senior level of government, inspiring a credible argument to negotiate with the actual holder of the purse strings, school district funding in New York is provided in roughly even measures from local and state sources, with under ten percent contributed by the Federal government. Even more significantly, unlike the centralized structures of the SNTE and OSSTF, the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), controlled by UFT through the large proportion of the delegates, dues and officers that it contributes, principally acts as an umbrella association for local unions to lobby the Albany legislature, lacking any legally binding collective bargaining rights, or significant power independent of its affiliates. Absent these structures for formally scaling up contract negotiations to the state level, NYSUT could apply its statewide presence in public campaigns as it has around education funding. It has attempted to support the parent-led Opt Out movement, the state's most powerful grassroots education mobilization, that seeks to undermine the state's standardized grades 3 to 8 testing regime. However while joining calls to parents to opt their children out from the tests, NYSUT has been limited by the official stance of the UFT, which in 2015 did not support the movement. While 20 percent of children were opted out of the exams across the state in 2015, the rate was less than two percent in NYC (Shapiro 2015b). In the absence of participating in and leading strong statewide opposition, the UFT thereby finds

itself with weakened capacities to resist Cuomo's 2015 reform of teacher evaluations, which by increasing the power of standardized testing, has far reaching consequences for teachers' professional autonomy.

5.7: Cuomo's Expansion of Standardized Testing into Teacher Evaluation: Undermining Professional Autonomy

The eclipse of teachers' professional autonomy in New York by punitive evaluation structures developed in the 2000s within the context of the first major federal interventions in US education policy since the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965⁹⁴. A key plank of President George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) federal legislation enacted in 2002, was mandating states to annually administer high stakes tests to students from grades 3 to 12. The results were used to reward or penalize districts and individual schools, and justify funding charter schools, part of an ethos of fomenting competition to mimic the economic consequences of globalization (Hursh 2007; Ravitch 2013a). However as NCLB required states to ensure virtually all of its students passed all exams by 2014, faced with this unreality, and the legislative inability to amend NCLB, the US DOE has consistently granted waivers to states on this requirement, so long as they presented evidence of pursuing desirable policies (Hursh 2013: 578).⁹⁵ The NCLB provides another strong example of the tendency of neoliberal governance to scale up policy making, while limiting local autonomy and downloading accountability for execution (Peck & Tickell 2002; Hursh 2013).

⁹⁴ Which topped up local and state funds in school districts with low income children (Ravitch 2013a: 280).

⁹⁵ This was finally addressed with a bipartisan revision of NCLB into the 'Every Student Succeeds Act' by the US Congress in December 2015, devolving significant powers of the US DOE back to state governments (Strauss 2015b).

The Regents exams served this purpose at the high school level in New York State. Justified by fears of rising mediocrity like so many other education policies harkening back to the 1983 *Nation At Risk* report, the state made its optional five high school Regents exams mandatory for graduation in 1996 (Hantzopoulos & Tyner-Mullings 2012: xli). Academics (Hursh 2007, 2013; Winerip 2012) and teachers interviewed here⁹⁶ have contended that reinforced under NCLB, this has resulted in a narrowing of both school timetables (ie. the selection of available courses) and the actual content of individual courses, to emphasize learning content directly related to the five mandatory Regents. A teacher at a small school describes the imperative of teaching the test:

So my English class, I'm getting ready to give an assignment tomorrow on question 27 on the Regents exam, which is a very specific way of writing a short literary analysis. I wouldn't be giving that garbage if I could be giving exactly what I wanted to do. But I have to teach them the language of the test. The specific language of it is, *controlling idea*. That's what they have to write, a controlling idea. That's not in the Common Core!⁹⁷ They don't use the language of the *controlling idea* in the Common Core. Nobody uses the word *controlling idea* in their pedagogy, in their instruction. It's not a universal word like *thesis* or *argument* or *claim*, it's none of that. But this is what you ask, cause you have to know what a controlling idea is when they take that test. (New York Teacher 4: Interviewed Dec. 2014)

Despite the original progressive ideals of the founders of NYC's small schools movement as described above, the vast majority of small schools created under Bloomberg, facilitated by their narrow course offerings due to scale, tended to teach to the Regents, often encouraged by their

⁹⁶ New York Teachers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 12. Interviewed between December 2014 and April 2015.

⁹⁷ The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) is a significant issue impacting the professional autonomy of US teachers that is not addressed in this chapter. Common Core is an attempt at creating a standardized, national set of curriculum expectations by grade and subject. It has been lauded as an effort to ensure all students are taught according to the same high expectations, overcoming vast race and class inequities. Its outcome for secondary education is debated by education activists. Its provisions for expanding standardized testing for Kindergarten to grade 2 has attracted significant opposition (Weiner: Interviewed Dec. 2014). NYC teachers reported that it has had a minimal direct impact on their work. Among the various criticisms it has received, perhaps the most relevant here is that its curricular expectations are impossibly high for many struggling schools in impoverished areas, and that when tied to RTTT, a pretext is created for blaming and firing teachers for the low test scores of their students.

principals. According to a 2008 Policy Studies Associates survey⁹⁸ of teachers and administrators at 76 small New Century High Schools from 2002 to 2006, “Teachers provided successively higher ratings of the alignment of instruction with Regents requirements over time.” And, “...successively lower ratings of student discipline and their own influence on school policy and curriculum.”⁹⁹ (Foley et al 2008: 14). Teachers assessed their diminishing influence in the school (Foley et al 2008: 23). Meanwhile, they indicated consistently high rates of observation and control by principals over their classroom instructional practices.¹⁰⁰ This study concurs with Barrett, at the State University of New York (SUNY), who concludes that the influence of NCLB policies like high stakes testing, has the “capacity to fundamentally alter teachers’ professional practices and identities.” (2009: 1018).

A history teacher explains how interventions from principals to teach to the test in order to raise school scores has degraded the professional craft of educating:

To some degree, in the major subjects the tests [Regent exams] always dictate things. ... At the same time, there can be a lot of freedom. [Y]ou can take risks as a teacher in a school with a principal who doesn’t micromanage... But if you have a principal who’s not sympathetic or who doesn’t understand history, or how to teach it, or just looks at the review books and says ‘follow this curriculum,’ as a teacher you have even less freedom. In some ways, the tests always dictate what you have to teach, but when you have a bad principal, they’ll even dictate how you’re going to teach it, at what pace, what you’ll emphasize, what you won’t... I think some of the tests are pretty good, and force the students to do some thoughtful intellectual work... The problem is the punitive nature of

⁹⁸ Funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, among other institutions to evaluate the effectiveness of the many new small schools that they had financially supported.

⁹⁹ Aligning instruction with the Regents are identified as: “Selecting curricular materials, developing curriculum, designing classroom assessments, developing a school improvement plan, designing or selecting professional development opportunities.” (Foley et al 2008: 15). Influence on school policy and curriculum are defined as, “Establishing school discipline policies, Establishing and shaping the school curriculum, Selecting instructional materials that support the curriculum, Determining student retention and promotion policy, Making staffing and/or hiring decisions.” (Foley et al 2008: 23).

¹⁰⁰ Teachers strongly agreed with statements including: “My principal monitors the curriculum I use in my classroom to see that it reflects my school’s educational focus” and “My principal monitors my classroom instructional practices to see that they reflect the school’s educational focus.” (Foley et al 2008: 21).

it- if the students don't do well, the school loses its funding. (New York Teacher 2: Interviewed Dec. 2014)

This teacher's reference to schools losing funding due to low test scores refers to Bloomberg's school letter grade rating system, under which schools would be rewarded or punished, which was ended under De Blasio. A former elementary teacher and MORE co-founder relates:

This was fourth grade, East Harlem... we were in the middle of a week long [science] investigation, in the middle of that day's time in the investigation. The kids had all these materials out, they were measuring, looking, making notes, and the assistant principal tells me to put all that away and start doing test prep right now. And I said, 'well yeah, sure okay. As soon as we're done with this, we'll clean it up and we'll get started.' She said, 'No, right now.' So in front of the kids I had to beg her to let us continue the experiment. I failed. And we literally had to take everything as it was, notes and everything, and just put it away. Turn to page 39. Answer question 28: a, b, or c. (New York Teacher 1: Interviewed Dec. 2014)

The formal basis of power between teachers and the principals in terms of establishing time that is dedicated to test prep can vary dramatically:

In some schools, test preparation is a course, it's like considered a separate block of time, time is taken out for just pure test prep. In some schools it starts from the very first day of school, with assessment tests, drills and all that kind of thing. ...everyone's thinking about the tests. They have to, in order to survive. And so what some principals do to protect teachers and children from the pressures of the test and test-based ideas of education, is try to encourage teachers to integrate things they know or suspect will be on the tests into their regular teaching. (New York Teacher 1: Interviewed Dec. 2014)

How do those varying conditions get negotiated? Is it solely the discretion of the principals, in terms of the policies or their philosophical inclinations? His response suggests the school by school nuance of teacher and principal power relations, and the limits of existing union protections for professional judgement in NYC:

On paper, presumably the teacher has a lot of leeway to determine precisely how a given lesson will be taught. However, the reality is that if a principal gives a direct order, a teacher who doesn't carry out that order is therefore according to the rules, the regulations that govern the principal-teacher interaction, the teacher is subject to

accusations of insubordination. So what the union often advises teachers to do is go along with it, but if you feel the contract has been violated, than you can grieve it. But in practice... people essentially defer to what the principal says we're all going to do. ... Or if they attempt to subvert it, they do it on the down-low. They close their classroom door or try to do something different... In general, the first schools where you see teacher resistance to testing, where teachers have organized to refuse to administer the tests, to refuse to do test preparation... the principal has one way or another given a signal. (New York Teacher 1: Interviewed Dec. 2014)

This again illustrate the decisive influence, post-Bloomberg, of administrators in setting the tone of the school in relation to the ability of teachers to act with professional autonomy, especially in the context of high stakes testing.

These accounts of frustrated teachers compelled to spend class time teaching a concept of limited use because of its adoption by the Regents exam, the history teacher whose professional capacity to plan lessons is curtailed, and the science teacher forced to shelve an interactive lab for test prep, serve as snapshots of the outcome of NCLB's mandate for high stakes testing.¹⁰¹ Educators have summarized the most significant consequence of the Obama administration's Race to the Top (RTTT), as taking these high stakes tests beyond defining what's taught in the classroom, to directly determining teachers' job security. Unlike NCLB's legal mandate which compels states to implement standardized testing, RTTT implemented its agenda through a \$5 billion fund, particularly attractive to state governments suffering from significant loss of tax revenue in the aftermath of the 2008-09 recession. Winning applicants (19 out of 46 states and DC that attempted) secured the agreement of local school boards and teachers' unions to raise limits on the number of charter schools, institute processes to close schools with low test scores,

¹⁰¹ Not only do educators argue that high stakes exams like the Regents frequently have poorly constructed questions, Hursh (2013: 580) cites research by Winerip, to argue that the difficulty of the state Regents is manipulated year to year in order to meet political objectives of demonstrating either rising scores, or renewed toughness. He also cites acknowledgments of grade inflation in the English Regents exam by former NYSED Chancellor Merryl Tisch (2009-2015). New York pass rates on math and English Regents exams rose dramatically to 82 and 69 percent in 2009, to fall to 54 and 42 percent with revised tests the following year (Kuhn 2014: 49).

and determine at least 20 percent of teachers' annual evaluations through Value Added Assessments, based on 'growth' of student scores between tests taken at the beginning and the end of the school year. For meeting these requirements, in 2010 New York State received \$700 million spread over four years.¹⁰² However with half of these funds mandated for spending on student testing and observations tied to teacher evaluations, the actual additional amount districts will receive per student is just \$33.50 per year (Ravitch 2013a: 99; Hursh 2013: 574-576). With such a modest contribution to education budgets in exchange for considerable administrative restructuring, the extent that pursuit of RTTT funding was ideologically motivated will be further suggested through the description below of Governor Andrew Cuomo's dogged efforts to ensure Value Added Assessments determined teachers' evaluations to the full extent possible.

Another teacher, currently at a critical small school where all but the English Regents exam is waived, describes her past experience at a conventional high school prepping students for the math Regents:

[T]he tests can test anything out of 12 different chapters. Most teachers I know, if they get through all 12 chapters it's because they're a speed racer and there's not a lot of depth of learning happening... [M]y colleague and I went over 15 years of exams and tallied the topics, all this statistical analysis, to decide which six we're going to teach this year because that's all the time we have. And they scored great on all the past exams, and then that year for whatever reason, it's [the actual exam] just totally different... And I was just like, 'What the hell!' We just spent nine months working our butts off, doing the best they can- Saturday school, after school, sitting in an office with tick marks for a test we don't even care about. And then they flunk. So now I'm a shitty teacher. Because based on this test score I didn't do my job, and I didn't prepare kids and now there goes my MOSL score. (New York Teacher 5: Interviewed Dec. 2014)

Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) is the New York State value added assessment. At the high school level, Regents exams fulfill this role as the MOSL at the end of the school year.

¹⁰² The size of the grants is commiserate to the state's population, with smaller states receiving far less.

Since receipt of RTTT funds began in 2010, New York State’s Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) for teachers has consisted of two components: a series of informal or formal observations of classroom teaching by the school’s principal or an outside evaluator, and the MOSL. Official observations in New York State are based on the patented Danielson evaluation rubric, which specifies 22 distinct areas of teacher competency. It was narrowed to eight areas in the 2014 UFT contract, covering lesson planning, professional responsibilities, the classroom environment and instructional methods, with the last two categories holding greater weight (UFT 2014). Initial requirements of two observations per year were raised in 2014 to at least one formal (mutually scheduled, period long) and three informal (unannounced, 15 minute) observations, or six informal observations. Teachers with ‘Effective’ or ‘Highly Effective’ ratings require 1-2 fewer observations. Some teachers interviewed here report having received fewer observations, noting the practical logistical difficulties for administrators of potentially scheduling hundreds of observations a year for all of their staff members. Overall, they reported far more concern about the impact of the MOSL test scores on their evaluations¹⁰³ (Hursh 2013: 583; NYC DOE 2015).

In 2011, Cuomo’s legislature doubled the MOSL component to count for 40 percent of the APPR, with observations reduced to 60 percent. NYSUT and the UFT responded with legal challenges, but the new 40 percent threshold stood, with the caveat that teachers at each school could choose to have part of the additional 20 percent evaluated through an additional locally

¹⁰³ A teacher says of the observation portion of the evaluation, “The new evaluation system that was implemented in New York, the Danielson System... it didn’t have an impact on me directly... I never received a negative rating under it, but it created tons of work. It made the evaluation process incredibly time consuming and stressful, and it also made it feel less under my control because that rubric is... filled with language that an administrator can play with and the standard that it shoots for in terms of what you do in a classroom on a day to day basis with 34 kids, it’s just not realistic. ... It just creates a lot of anxiety and stress which cumulatively is miserable for teachers.” (New York Teacher 2: Interviewed Dec. 2014)

developed standardized test. However faced with additional paperwork, many schools opt to simply give the existing Regents exams the 40 percent weighting (Hursh 2013: 584). Cuomo and others strongly advocated for increasing the weight of student testing in teacher evaluations with the claim that it is scientifically possible to isolate and quantifiably measure a teachers' contribution to student knowledge year over year.¹⁰⁴ Factors like the socioeconomic status of students and parental education levels were minimized in this formula with an argument that considering them is tantamount to lowered expectations for poor students (rather than a rationale for greater student supports). Accordingly, proponents argued value added assessments of the impact of teachers on their student's test scores offered the most *objective* measure of the quality of an educator. Teachers who did not 'add value' could then be justifiably fired (Kuhn 2014: 45). As Texas School Board Superintendent and anti-testing activist John Kuhn explains, "The real magic -and faith -comes in when the algorithm attempts to set a predicted amount of improvement that each student *ought to have made*; the teacher is rated based on how often he or she outperforms the individual improvement called for by the algorithm." (Kuhn: 2012: 45) Ravitch explains how this idea initially proposed by an industrial statistician from Tennessee, William Sanders, subsequently promulgated by economists at the conservative Hoover Institute, and entered public discourse in 2010 through its uptake by traveling neoliberal education advocates Michelle Rhee and Joel Klein (2012: 100-103). It was then appended as a key aspect of RTTT and diffused to states across the US. With strong support from Bloomberg and the new

¹⁰⁴ Hoover Institute economists presented models which claimed to demonstrate specified dollar amounts that 'great' teachers added to the earnings of their graduates. The concept received front page coverage in the *New York Times* and an approving citation by President Obama in his 2012 State of the Union address. The responses of critics that this modelling represented such a gross simplification of human lives as to be meaningless, received far less attention (Ravitch 2013: 105-106). In the same speech Obama also stated, "teachers should stop teaching to the test", prompting Hursh to comment, "But RTTT, his own program, forces teachers to teach to the test. To do otherwise is to risk being publicly shamed and fired." (Hursh 2013: 584)

governor, but with the UFT refusing to agree to its form of implementation, it was imposed in NYC by the state education department, while other school boards and unions across the state enjoyed greater room to negotiate more local autonomy (Tisch & Berlin 2014: 2-4).

Fearing for their jobs if the exam scores of their students do not sufficiently rise, the result is a subordination of the professional capacity of high school teachers. Rather than interpreting broad curricular requirements through comprehensive student-centred and project-based learning designed based on teaching deeper, more qualitative principles, and more likely to be based on ‘authentic tasks’¹⁰⁵, emphasis shifts to rote-learning quantitative data. A major impetus behind NYC’s critical small schools movement has been the creation of institutions, many grouped in the Consortium of Essential Schools and the New York Consortium for Performance Standards, which substitute most of the Regents for these alternative forms of evaluations (Hantzopoulos and Tyner-Mullings 2012: xxxiii). In 2015, these schools enrolled a few thousand NYC high school students, a tiny portion of the Department of Education.

With the full implementation of the APPR in the 2013-14 school year, Hursh (2013) anticipated that the evaluation system would result in mass firings, as he argued it was intended to do. Citing NYSED’s policy, he explained that:

[F]ewer than half the teachers will be rated as ‘effective’ or ‘very effective,’ with most rated as ‘ineffective’ and ‘developing.’ This will occur for two reasons. First, teachers are required to be rated on a bell curve, so that 10% of teachers, whether based on test scores, observation, or other locally created criteria, must be rated as ‘ineffective’ and 40% as ‘developing.’ Second, ‘before a teacher can be considered effective, her students’ score growth must exceed the average for all teachers – that means based on scores, more than 50 percent of all teachers will not be effective.’ Third, although the median total score will be 50 out of 100 points (remember, it is a bell curve), teachers will have to score a total of 75 points or more to be rated ‘effective.’ Therefore, most teachers will be found to

¹⁰⁵ Assignments designed to more closely resemble ‘real world’ activities, Eg. in an English class, writing a newspaper editorial on a current event, rather than simply a two paragraph response.

be ‘ineffective’ or ‘developing.’ In New York City, if teachers are found to be ‘ineffective overall’ for two consecutive years, the district can begin the process of removing the teachers. (Hursh 2013: 583)

However in the 2013-14 teacher evaluation, less than 1 percent of teachers in the state were rated Ineffective, and over 95 percent were rated Highly Effective or Effective. With NYC’s results more closely tied to state test score MOSLs, 1.2 percent of teachers were rated Ineffective, but only 9.2 percent were rated Highly Effective, compared to 58.2 percent across the rest of the state (Tisch & Berlin 2014: 3). In a highly publicized response, Cuomo decried the results as “baloney,” claiming that more teachers must actually be ineffective, to account for insufficient improvements in student test scores (Smith 2015). Retired (2015) Long Island principal and anti-standardized testing activist Carol Burris explains Chancellor Merryl Tisch and Cuomo’s motivations:

To Tisch’s dismay, APPR which she helped design, has not produced the results that she and Cuomo wanted... The plan, according to the state’s Race to the Top application, was for 10 percent of all teachers to be found ineffective, with small numbers designated as highly effective. The curve of the sorting bell was not achieved. (Strauss 2015a)

As part of the 2015-16 budget, Cuomo pushed through the state legislature in April 2015 new measures he believed would result in a higher number of teachers being labelled ineffective and on the path to termination. School districts would be compelled to renegotiate their collective agreements and implement the policies locally by the following November, or lose increases in state education funding. First, the 60/40 balance of observations and MOSLs would be replaced by a more ambiguous matrix, with an even weight between both, but with negative (Developing or Ineffective) results on the MOSL lowering Effective or Highly Effective ratings on the observation component. After two consecutive Ineffective ratings, a teacher *may* be

charged with ‘incompetence’, leading to dismissal for untenured teachers and trials within 90 days for tenured teachers. After three consecutive ratings the teacher *must* be charged, with a decision within 30 days. Next, the number of years service before being eligible to apply for tenure was increased from three to four, with Effective or Highly Effective ratings required in at least three of the four years. Finally, schools in the bottom 5 percent of state testing results for ten years may be restructured by a board or state appointed ‘receiver’ who can fire any or all staff (Bakeman 2015; Brody 2015).

The response of NYSUT and the UFT to these attacks on the job security of their members mainly took the form of intense lobbying in Albany. Union negotiators claimed victory in limiting the increase in probation to four years (Cuomo wanted five years), and eliminating a proposed tax credit for donors to private schools that would have been an initial step to subsidizing private tuition, and was fiercely fought for by charter school lobbyists. They were unsuccessful in forestalling the further influence of standardized testing results over teachers. Where they failed, New York state’s Opt Out movement claimed some success. Coordinated by parent-led networks like New York State Allies for Public Education, the cumulative effort of parent associations in districts across the state resulted in over 220 000 students in grades 3 to 8 sitting out their math and/or science state tests in April 2015, over a fifth of all eligible students (Harris & Fessenden 2015). The opt-out movement was present throughout the state, but the highest concentration of test refusers was in the predominantly middle class Long Island suburbs of Norfolk and Suffolk counties, where it received vocal support from superintendents, elected trustees and local teachers’ union leaders, contributing to an overwhelming majority opting out. Opt out was a minor presence in poorer, rural districts, and in NYC, where despite tripling in

numbers from the previous year, was still less than 2 percent of all elementary test takers¹⁰⁶. Of NYC's 7900 students who were opted out, over 1650 were in District 15, the affluent Park Slope neighbourhood in Brooklyn (Rodriguez 2015; Harris 2015).

The teachers' union president¹⁰⁷ of a small Long Island school board explained how parents in her district became galvanized in response to state measures to quash the budding dissent and ensure the exams were administered:

These school districts were going to pass resolutions that they were going to 'discuss' whether or not to even give the test in their district. ...both districts were told, by the State of New York that if they did that... the State would remove every member of the board of education and the superintendent, and put in their own representatives to run the district.

"That doesn't happen in America," she continued. "In America, we believe in local control. We believe that in fact, if we elect a board of education, that board of education is supposed to represent *us* locally. The state is not allowed to tell us what we can and cannot discuss!..." The state government's intervention helped build opposition to the tests:

The parents went crazy! ...[the] school board never brought the resolution to the floor. Superintendent, the news media, everyone was there. The superintendent said, 'I've been advised by council not to talk about this.'

In response, activist parents began to self organize, "I don't really know the politics in your country... I don't know if you know mine. What I'm telling you is, this is revolution stuff, in America. This is crazy shit." She later remarked during our interview:

¹⁰⁶ For NYC anti-testing activists, key reasons behind the city's far lower opt-out rates are the use of the grade 4 and 8 exam results as part of the school choice application for some middle and high schools, the Mayoral Control structure which replaces the role of elected trustees who have vocally opposed the tests elsewhere, and the geographic dispersal of students attending schools across districts and boroughs, making the organization of parents more difficult (Author's observations). New York Teacher 1 (2014) makes a similar argument above about the impact of school choice on parental activism.

¹⁰⁷ The following exchange is extracted from a Skype interview with New York Teacher 9, in April 2015.

NYSUT's agenda has not been an anti-testing agenda. It is only now becoming, because the parent groups are standing up and they've decided they're going to protect public schools, and they're going to protect their children. So unfortunately, my state and national union have not been setting the pace. They have been reacting to the fact that *they* are going to be thrown out of office, just like the legislative members, and the senators and the governor. This will destroy Cuomo. It will, because he will never be able to run for president. (New York Teacher 9: Interviewed April 2015)

With Cuomo and his bipartisan allies facing an electoral threat, the scaling up of the initiative in neoliberal education policy in New York may have reached its point of vulnerability. The groundswell of public opposition in some politically influential swing vote regions of New York State to what are popularly viewed as excessive testing of children, and for some, an attack on teachers, has reverberated across the state. Teachers in NYC would benefit, despite the much weaker opt-out movement in their city, as would high school teachers, despite public organizing and protest focusing on grades 3 to 8, as these are statewide policies affecting elementary and secondary.

The NYC DOE's 2015-16 *Advance Guide for Educators*, which explains how the teacher evaluation system functions, includes a notice that revisions may be made later in the school year in line with Cuomo's legislation (NYC DOE 2015). The changes may not be necessary. In late November 2015, as local school districts were expected to complete and submit their revised teacher evaluation policies to NYSED, rumours emerged that Cuomo was considering a reversal of his own policies. The musings followed a high profile statement by Obama that testing should be reduced, and only occupy a legally limited set of time in the school year. A month later, NYSED announced that MOSLs and value added assessments would be suspended entirely from annual teacher evaluations until at least 2019, accompanying an overhaul of the Common Core State Standards on which the standardized tests were based. The previous August, NYSED

announced that school districts with high opt out rates would not be punished by having their funding levels frozen, as state authorities had threatened leading up to the tests several months earlier. The results of the 2014-15 state teacher evaluation revealed that 92 percent of NYC teachers were rated Highly Effective or Effective. (Zernike 2015; Taylor 2015a; Taylor 2015b; (Chapman 2015). If their own unions lacked the capacity to do so, will it be New York's organized parents that save their children's teachers?

5.8: State of Our Union, State of Our Schools

Throughout this chapter there have been references to the response of the UFT to the neoliberal policies here that have cumulatively transformed teachers' work in New York City by limiting their professional autonomy. We have heard about the impact of Mayoral Control for concentrating power in the hands of the mayor and the chancellor, weakening official forums for community challenges. The proliferation of small schools and 'school choice' that changed the spatial organization of the workplace. Policies which increased the precariousness of teachers by making tenure more difficult to obtain, and surplussed teachers easier to eliminate. Finally, the scaling up of policy making beyond the local plane on which collective bargaining is conducted, to make fundamental changes to the teacher evaluation process. Beneath all of these dynamics we have the political economy of austerity financing for public education, the gradual shift in state funding to the private sector in the form of charter schools, and rising socioeconomic inequity experienced by poor and working class, and racialized communities that represent the overwhelming majority of NYC's students.

Underlying policy shifts initiated chiefly by Bloomberg and later Cuomo, I argue, has been a largely consistent tendency to remake the teaching profession towards one that is disempowered and precarious. In doing so, we have seen a hollowing out of the power of the union, at the level which I believe matters most, the school site. Unlike once powerful teachers' unions in the US that have lost institutional capacity from the passing of 'Right to Work' style laws that hemorrhage dues revenue as in Wisconsin after 2011, or lost thousands of members from the expansion of non-union charters as in Detroit and Los Angeles, on paper the UFT remains as powerful as ever. Yet all of the policies I described above add up to weakening the capacity of teachers to defend their ability to exercise their professional capacities in their schools. I believe that some of these defeats are due to decisions by the leadership of the UFT, which have concentrated power and initiative at the top of the union, neglecting the chapter level, and a political strategy that has striven unsuccessfully to contain these policies through high level lobbying, while eschewing the building of alliances, as in the case of the Opt Out movement. From these decisions, one can see a consistent ideological orientation on the part of the leadership, that is unwilling to support grassroots, insurgent mobilization. For the most part, it does not acknowledge the contemporary manifold attacks on public education as being consistent within an historical context governed by the neoliberal variant of capitalism. Let alone a perspective that sees beyond the legislative programs and actors of City Hall, Albany or Washington DC, to horizons of similar policies crossing borders elsewhere, and the resistance that they encounter, whether in Ontario or Mexico City. Lacking a systemic analysis, a comprehensive alternative vision is not forthcoming and the battle continues to be fought in an isolated fashion. For these reasons, I devote a substantial focus here to the Movement of Rank

and File Educators (MORE), which has put forward an alternative vision for the union in this context.

The final section of this chapter focuses then on how the UFT has attempted to change, and been changed, during these circumstances, to help explain the unevenness of neoliberal reform across my three case studies. I begin with an overview of the current structure of the UFT's leadership and school chapters, attempting to understand some reasons behind the weakness of the union's presence in many schools. I will then trace the development of the MORE caucus, its use of policy mobility 'from below' through its inspiration from Chicago's Caucus of Rank and File Educators (CORE), its struggles to both gain a critical mass of support from colleagues, and following the CORE model, build meaningful alliances with parent groups. I draw heavily on interviews with union activists, many affiliated with MORE, and to a much lesser extent, former UFT officials, one elected, another a senior staff person¹⁰⁸. I also utilize notes from attending MORE caucus events, meetings, rallies and UFT delegate assemblies, and a content analysis of MORE, UFT and the incumbent Unity Caucus materials.

Continuing his explanation above of how the UFT responded to dysfunctional large high schools housing poor and racialized students, by supporting the small schools movement in the 1980s and 90s, and creating the School Based Option that allows staff to opt out of certain work schedule provisions in the collective agreement, this former official¹⁰⁹ describes how the union leadership confronted the education challenges of the Bloomberg era. He draws a dichotomy

¹⁰⁸ Despite a letter of endorsement from the president of my own union OSSTF, multiple attempts at contacting senior elected UFT officials by mail, email and telephone were unsuccessful.

¹⁰⁹ Former UFT Official 2: Interviewed Apr. 2015

between critics of the union executive, who equate unionism with comprehensive contractual rights, but do not recognize structural crises facing the school system, and a more farsighted leadership:

[T]here are people -particularly internal opposition in the union, who have this vision that unionism is industrial unionism, and they will see this as union betraying some fundamental interest. But the union has- the *union leadership*, is a better way to put it, because even in the lengths of people who aren't in the opposition, don't necessarily understand this, but this sense that you need to change public education. You can't continue to have a system- this drop out rate and leaves so many poor kids and kids of colour behind. ...[I]n the United States, the way in which education reform in the corporate sense gains its power is by pointing to the kinds of failings of the school system with regards to race and class. Even though it's not like teachers or unions devised this system, or that they approve of it. Nonetheless, the charter schools in New York City were originally put into three of the poorest communities, huge concentrations of people of colour: Harlem, South Bronx, central Brooklyn... In New York City, the union actually sponsors two charter schools of its own... The problem with charter schools is not the structural relationship. It's not because you don't have the government officially running the school that that's the problem. The problem with the charter school movement are the people who have seized control of it and run its leadership. So the idea was how we could produce a different vision of what a charter school should be, including a different vision of collective bargaining where we would have a contract that wasn't this kind of long, detailed industrial style contract with regulations, but had in it, teachers having voice and control over all the work decisions. Sort of taking that bargaining we had made with the new small schools and elaborating it. (Former UFT Official 2: Interviewed Apr. 2015)

However he acknowledges that most charter school advocates aren't interested in this experiment by the union:

[W]hat interests them is that in the United States there are basically four unions left that can mount a real political presence, AFT, NEA, AFSCME and SEIU... And so to the extent to which they can undermine and incapacitate and eviscerate teachers unions, they are in a position politically to really have very little organized opposition to corporate control and incredible amounts of wealth and money in the electoral system. (Former UFT Official 2: Interviewed Apr. 2015)

A MORE activist had a harsher critique of the UFT leadership's effort to create a progressive model for charter schools which he viewed as indicative of a conservative approach to working within the system:

[F]rom the beginning their whole strategy is to retain a seat at the table. Stay in the conversation. On charter schools, they said, 'we can't straight out oppose charter schools, because parents love them! Therefore, we're going to start our own charter school! And prove that a unionized charter school is the best way to go.'... we later discovered, when they had one of these privatization summits, where somebody secretly videotaped a presentation of a guy on how to trick the unions, that *that* was a strategy! They were like, 'We're going to tell the unions to start their own charter schools. If they buy it, then they can't oppose charter schools because they're part of it.' (New York Teacher 1: Interviewed Dec. 2014)

With the rapid proliferation of charter schools in urban US school districts, the UFT like other teachers' unions, has worked with the AFT's Alliance of Charter School Teachers and Staff (ACTS), to organize the non-union schools, with some modest successes at smaller independent charters in NYC (Winslow 2013; Zionts 2015). Eight percent of NYC's approximately 1.1 million students in publicly funded schools attend charters (Camera 2015).

Alongside the structural transformations in the organization of the NYC DOE under Bloomberg discussed above, came a disruption to how the union intervened on day to day workplace issues and school-level grievances. Describing how this worked previously:

The power dynamics in a traditional school, there are various sorts of checks on principal's authority, but they're not so great that we're dealing with a mythical world in which there were no abusive principals... In those days, one of the ways they would often get resolved is when you have an elaborate DOE bureaucracy, where you have for high schools five or six superintendencies, which are as big as districts all over the country. ... So depending upon the relationship and other things, if things got really bad, more often than not, the union would be able to go to the superintendent and they would be able to work out some changes, some accommodations. (Former UFT Official 2: Interviewed Apr. 2015)

The collapsing of geographically defined community school districts into various forms of support networks resulted in the shifting of administrative authority. While principals gained increased power within their 1800 schools through a broad range of policies, power over them came to be wielded to an increasingly direct extent from DOE headquarters, via surveillance and intervention based on student test scores. The intermediary structure of superintendents weakened, which according to this former UFT official, coincides with a push by Bloomberg's DOE to diminish the union's capacity to effectively resolve workplace problems through grievances and arbitration:

[T]hey make a decision at the DOE to basically destroy the grievance system. Because the grievance system is based on a kind of funnel where you only want to take a small number of grievances to arbitration, the highest level. So you try to resolve these at lower levels. ... The DOE refuses to solve any grievances at lower levels. They create this massive bottleneck at the top of the system, because the way arbitration works for us is we have a limited number of days that we have arbitrators to hear arbitrations. So we can only schedule so many arbitrations... the union [is] constantly trying to increase the number of arbitration days. Because what's happening is too many things. We win all the arbitrations, because they're taking stuff that they can't win, but the object at the top is to block up the system. So that is one dynamic that makes it hard for us to use the grievance system. They do the same thing before a teacher gets tenure, they are at that point an at-will employee. So there is supposed to be an appeal for your year-end ratings, which is really the only means of redress that a teacher that's not tenured would have. They basically decided that they're not ever going to overturn a principal's unsatisfactory year end evaluation. (Former UFT Official 2: Interviewed Apr. 2015)

This form of 'inside baseball', obscure to those not involved in the union's leadership and unreported in standard accounts of contemporary education policy change in NYC, results in reduced support from the larger union for school chapters locked in conflict with administrators. This helps shift the balance of power to the latter's benefit:

Those principals that are malevolent have a much freer reign to be malevolent. Which is still not by any means a majority in the school system. And they make the superintendents into empty shirts... So the ability of the superintendents to actually

override the principal. You have a system in which it becomes very difficult for the union to do the kind of servicing stuff that it did before. It doesn't keep a union chapter from organizing, it simply makes the system that was in place for resolving conflicts impossible to work. (Former UFT Official 2: Interviewed Apr. 2015)

A former senior UFT staff member describes the duties of the school-level union chapter chair:

[T]he eyes and ears and mouth of the union at the chapter level. The chapter leader is involved in grievance procedures and leads at grievance hearings. The chapter leader negotiates with the principal to withdraw charges, or finesses that those charges aren't filed in the first place... [I]t's a real job. People want to be chapter leaders for two reasons, one is they're militants, two is they're militants who also want to be in the leadership [Unity] caucus. Three, they're militants who hate the leadership caucus. But for the most part, these are tough guys, and women, it's mostly women, who recognize that things ain't getting better, with the exception of the extraordinary principal. (Former UFT Official 1: Interviewed Jan. 2015)

He provides an overview of the health of the union's school-based chapters in this context:

Of the 1400 institutions, there are not 1400 active chapters [there are over 1800 schools]. Depending on who you talk to, there are either 800 or less. Now of the 800, they tend to work fairly well. Sometimes, a chapter leader is a kiss ass, so they bury any problems and will finger troublemakers. Then you have chapter leaders who will put their necks out on the line everyday and risk Unsatisfactory ratings. A couple of U ratings and you're out. The union goes out of its way to defend the chapter leaders, whether they're part of the Unity caucus or part of the opposition caucuses. Because you lose one of them, and the camel's nose is under the tent! (Former UFT Official 1: Interviewed Jan. 2015)

MORE activists concurred that roughly half of all schools have functional union chapters.¹¹⁰ All teachers interviewed were asked to comment on the activity and health of the chapters in the schools where they have worked. Their responses indicated a wide diversity of experiences. One teacher explained why some chapter leaders were 'kiss asses':

[T]here's a lot of terrible chapter leaders now because we've had years of turnover and there's these schools where everyone's a young teacher and no one knows their rights, and the principal will even encourage a teacher they like to become chapter leader so that they can then impose... Yes, in some schools it is a company union. It's awful. (New York Teacher 2: Interviewed Dec. 2014)

¹¹⁰ Personal observations at MORE Conference, October 24, 2015, New York City.

The role played here by the absence from many NYC schools of large numbers of veteran teachers, frequently made up by untenured staff, reiterates arguments made above of the impact of these trends on the capacity of teachers to assert their professional autonomy in the face of administrative pressure to teach to the test. The extent that untenured teachers are vulnerable to retaliation by administrators for participating in union activities led facilitators at a MORE workshop on building school chapters to advise against them taking any form of visible leadership role in the union.¹¹¹ The above teacher also described how he experienced this retaliation while untenured, placing his employment at risk:

We had a union meeting once where the guy everyone knew was the principal's person, who's now an administrator... just came in and took some notes, and left. And everyone knew he wasn't there because he was a union guy, and I was observed [evaluated] the next day. He was coming to take attendance on who goes to the union meetings! (New York Teacher 2: Interviewed Dec. 2014)

This teacher and many others also described working at schools with strong union chapters and leaders.¹¹² Nevertheless, it is surely a sign of institutional weakness that many administrators are able to create an intimidating environment surrounding participation in their union at their school (also recall the two teachers at the start of this chapter explaining how their school's only veteran teacher was isolated from other staff as the chapter leader), how so many schools do not have a functional union presence, and in some it has been co-opted to serve managerial prerogatives. A major critique by MORE activists is the lack of initiative for many school chapters for involving its members in a participatory fashion to address significant issues. A MORE member described meetings at his former school:

¹¹¹ Personal observations at MORE Conference, October 24, 2015, New York City.

¹¹² New York Teachers 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 11. Interviewed Dec. 2014 to April 2015.

[I]t's during a lunch break or something, then there are cookies and chips. You can ask a few questions, and that's it. But it's never like *the chapter* makes decisions... There are some things the chapter has to vote on, like if we're going to make changes to our schedule, there are some things within our rights. But it's never like 'a charter school's going to colocate with us, what's our action plan for how we're going to fight that? How are we going to stop this, how are we going to rally the community to our side? (New York Teacher 1: Interviewed Dec. 2014)

MORE activists tended to blame the UFT leadership for not creating or supporting structures within the union that would encourage greater school site activity.¹¹³ For them and others, this has served as a major impetus to join the MORE caucus as a means to make structural changes within the union.

A Washington Heights middle school teacher who became a MORE activist, describes how coming from overwhelmingly non-union North Carolina, as a self-identified progressive, she was eager for the opportunity to be involved in her new union:

I started teaching here in 2009... I was very excited to join a union. I really liked the idea of it! My union rep at the time was like, 'Ok, well, here's a form you can fill out... we don't really have issues with our administration...' He did invite me later that year... to a restaurant reception to welcome the new UFT president, who at the time was Michael Mulgrew. I remember going and being very unimpressed, because the primary thing that was discussed was parking spaces... really, parking spaces?! [Laughs] Parking around the school. Which is an issue in New York City, getting to work on time, parking can be really expensive. I sort of get it, but I was surprised that was such a big topic of conversation. I was generally very unimpressed with Michael Mulgrew's demeanor and choice of words, all of those things. The food was really good at that reception though. I think they also had mixed drinks... So that was my first exposure to union stuff. (New York Teacher 11: Interviewed Apr. 2015)

For her, the official activities of the union at both her school and in the larger institution and its narrow 'business unionist' focus were unsatisfying. They did not appear to her to serve as vehicles to address the sprawling range of equity and social justice issues affecting both her

¹¹³ New York Teachers 1, 2, 3, 6, 11: Interviewed Dec. 2014 to Apr. 2015.

students and colleagues. At the end of her second year, she ran to be the school chapter chair and was defeated. She attributes her loss to a rumour spread by the incumbent chair that she was handpicked by the principal, with whom she had a good relationship. Other teachers viewed her suspiciously as a Teach for America alumni, and for her limited teaching experience. She does not regret the loss in hindsight, reflecting on the fate of a friend who won the chapter chair at her school while untenured, became embroiled in conflict with the principal, and was soon fired. A year later, now holding tenure and with stronger relations with her colleagues, she was elected chapter delegate, a position similar to a vice-chair. She became active in the broader union, leading to her awareness of MORE:

I started going to Delegate Assembly meetings. Of course my chapter leader was like, you don't really have to go. It's not important, no one goes. I went to a couple and I was like, 'Wow these aren't important, nothing happens!' [Laughs] It also kind of sucks. The speakers are really loud. It's like Mulgrew talking. My attendance that first year was not great. But towards the end of the year, there were a couple of times when people from MORE would speak up. Actually there was the resolution about specialized high schools and how they were unequal. That got my attention, I wanted to hang out with those people. They're saying smart things, they're bringing up good ideas. They're not just sitting here doing nothing. (New York Teacher 11: Interviewed Apr. 2015)

Adopting some ideas from her MORE colleagues, she is pleased with increased levels of activity she is seeing in her school chapter, leading to plans for further involvement on her part:

People have become more interested in union stuff because this year for every meeting I've sent out detailed minutes... [W]hen we did our evaluation petition [an initiative by MORE concerning teacher evaluations], I got our chapter to endorse it. People said yes. There's been a couple other little actions we've done as a chapter. And to the UFT's credit, they've started to do a little more stuff that calls for people to be participatory. So whenever that happens, I jump on it and try to get my chapter to do it. Or whenever there's an event, I say I'm going, who wants to come. So more people have taken an interest in union stuff. But we don't have regular meetings or anything like that... I've been frustrated with my chapter leader in the ways he's not been doing his job, now that I have a clear picture of what that job is, and so I've been thinking about running for a while. (New York Teacher 11: Interviewed Apr. 2015)

Meanwhile, she increased her involvement in MORE. From 2013, she served multiple six month terms on its steering committee, participating in discussions on the direction of the caucus. In her time, the group has overcome various internal political tensions. According to her and other participants, generational differences among activists are sometimes evident. As a large generalization, across gender and race (though MORE, reflecting the composition of teachers in NYC, is predominantly white) older activists were more likely to focus on strategizing and organizing to win chapter elections and expand the presence of the caucus in the larger union, leading to the 2016 UFT elections. Younger teachers tended to be drawn to discussions and workshops focused on building alliances with parents and high school students, emphasizing an anti-racist framework. They were also more likely to identify politically with the radical left, than their older colleagues who were more social democratic. The strength of the caucus is concentrated in the city's high schools, despite the prominence of several primary and middle school teachers among its founders and steering committee. At a meeting in April 2015, looking ahead to the fall 2016 union elections, the caucus set goals to double its share of the vote for executive positions from 18 percent to 35 percent and increase its base of supporters among chapter chairs and delegates in the union's monthly Delegate Assembly from roughly 80 to 200. The caucus was notably lacking in hubris over the prospects of actually winning seats on the union's executive.¹¹⁴

I arrived at Carroll Public School, set in the heart of a neighbourhood of well groomed brownstone townhouses in Brooklyn for a MORE conference in October 2015. Two high end toy

¹¹⁴ Author's personal observations at MORE meetings, socials and conferences, 2014 to 2015.

stores and two private tutoring companies operated within a block. Suggesting the political power of the neighbourhood, they were joined by the cheerful storefront office of the district's state assemblywoman. The primary school was immaculately clean, the hallways and auditorium covered with beautiful student artwork. The classrooms where we held our sessions appeared out of a photo from a government press conference on education policy. An American flag hung off the wall next to the blackboard, waving over neatly labelled baskets of picture books and art supplies. It was difficult to imagine here that any sort of crisis existed in US education.

Among 120 people registered for the conference, including a contingent of parent activists involved in the Opt Out movement, assembled in the auditorium. A plenary panel included one of these parents, who explained why she joined the movement after seeing a narrowing of her child's grade three curriculum to test prep. "My teacher knows my daughter better than any test score." she said to cheers from the audience. Outspoken anti-testing activist, elementary teacher and union chapter chair at the Earth School in Manhattan, Jia Lee was introduced as MORE's candidate for union president, to challenge Michael Mulgrew, candidate for the governing Unity caucus.¹¹⁵ Through Lee's efforts in April 2015, parents at her small K-4 school opted 104 students out of the state reading and math exams, a majority of those enrolled (Rodriguez 2015). She hailed a successful recent strike by Seattle teachers for having won the elimination of value added assessments in teacher evaluations, guaranteed 30 minute recesses in primary schools, limits to Special Ed and ESL workload, and investigations on the racialization of student discipline -all of which were greatly needed in NYC, she argued. Lee explained, as

¹¹⁵ Lee's story of organizing coworkers and parents to oppose and opt-out from NYS tests used for MOSL ratings is included in *More Than a Score: The New Uprising Against High-Stakes Testing* (2014), a moving anthology of writings by teachers, parents, students, administrators and academics reflecting on fighting against high stakes exams across the US.

would others throughout the conference, that the defining issue on which MORE's greatest source of inspiration, the Caucus of Rank and File Educators (CORE) built community alliances and ran successfully for leadership of the Chicago Teachers Union, was through opposing waves of school closures in predominantly black and Latino neighbourhoods. The issue on which MORE would seek to define itself would be offering a clear voice against high stakes testing, and as an enthusiastic ally to the emerging parent-led movement.

Alongside a determination to build alliances with parents, evident in the discourse and the content of the conference, was a self-conscious effort to engage in a form of policy mobility, sharing the strategies of other US teacher caucuses and unions. Participants in a workshop on racial justice sat among several tables, each with an 'artifact' representing the activism of teachers' caucuses and unions in NYC, Seattle, Chicago and Los Angeles. Lessons learned on policies promoting restorative justice, lower class sizes, prioritizing recruitment of teachers of colour, and delinking teacher testing from evaluations, were discussed and proposed for MORE's upcoming election platform. Present on the closing plenary were members of the Social Equality Caucus, MORE's equivalent within the Seattle Education Association, and Philadelphia's version, the Caucus of Working Educators. All are affiliated with the United Caucus of Rank and File Educators (UCORE) described in Chapter 4.

I run into Jen in the hallway. It's been six months since I interviewed her and her colleague Karen at their school on the Upper West Side. At the end of last June, Karen was fired by her principal after receiving an 'Ineffective' rating in her annual evaluation, weighed down by low student test scores on the Regents. Jen had been elected chapter delegate.

"Overwhelmingly," she said proudly. Like before, Jen is unsure of her future employment

prospects. “I’ve already filed two grievances. No superintendent in NYC is going to give me tenure.” She said. Now entering her sixth year, she will go up for tenure again in spring 2016. Her principal is still pushing the Learning Cultures curriculum on the staff. According to Jen, most of her young colleagues still keep their heads down and work towards gaining tenure. Despite her precariousness, she presses ahead with her activism, wanting to do more but limited by the time constraints of the job. She would resign rather than be fired, and then apply to law school and devote time to her writing.

Of the three case studies in this dissertation, it is in New York City that the work of teachers has been the most transformed by neoliberal policy. This is not to say that the context here for public education, or for that matter, teacher unionism, is the most acute or dire. For that I guide my reader to the next chapter. However in terms of the subordination of professional autonomy, what it means to be a teacher has to the greatest extent been neoliberalized here. Like other major US cities with predominantly black and Latino working class students, in the North under the Democratic Party’s electoral hegemony, old ward patronage politics converged and acquiesced to new technocratic forms of neoliberal governance like mayoral control. Just as important as understanding the extent of this project, is its unevenness across local and state jurisdictions, from place to place. NYC as a site of experimentation in transforming teachers’ work can be contrasted with its immediate suburbs where far more continuity exists, ironically the base of the strongest contemporary movement against the neoliberalization of education in New York State. Even among other old racialized and gentrifying urban centres, important differences can be found. Charter schools have not expanded at nearly as rapid a rate in NYC as

they have in Philadelphia, Detroit, Chicago, Los Angeles or DC, despite the unparalleled concentration of corporate power in downtown Manhattan and its far reaching political alliances (Camera 2015).

However the workforce has also been profoundly remade through the intersection of small schools, managerial principals, school choice and changes to tenure with the tying of annual evaluations to student test scores. Nevertheless, in response to the strength of the Opt-Out movement, the Cuomo administration abruptly reversed its plan to fire more teachers by increasing the linkage of evaluations to test scores. This experience suggests how even in this context, neoliberal policy is politically vulnerable to organized resistance. Meanwhile, the scaling up to Albany resembles similar dynamics in Illinois, Pennsylvania, Florida and Michigan, where conservative state capitols move to establish rule over spatially removed contentious urban centres. With the local UFT faced with a new spatial vulnerability, could the network building of grassroots caucuses offer a possible future model of social movement teacher unionism? MORE has made a start, but so far, faced with a far vaster terrain on which to organize and a much more entrenched incumbent leadership to challenge, it has not yet made the breakthroughs of its allies in Chicago and Los Angeles. Now on to Mexico City.

Chapter 6: Mexico City

6.1: Introduction

This chapter describes how the neoliberalization of education affected the professional autonomy of Mexico City's teachers from the mid 1990s through 2016. In contrast with the previous case study which focused on initiatives led by municipal and state authorities with the federal government in the background, a far greater attention is placed here on the impact of national policies in education governance. This is due to the highly centralized nature of the Mexican state, a tendency which despite some reversals with the decline of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in the 1990s, has only increased in the early 21st Century. Another major difference is the weaving throughout this chapter of the opposing roles of the official 'institutional' National Union of Education Workers (Sindicato Nacional de los Trabajadores de la Educación -SNTE), and its internal dissident movement, the National Coordination of Education Workers -Coordinadora Nacional de los Trabajadores de la Educación -CNTE). The SNTE has historically been controlled by the state, while the CNTE has struggled since its founding in 1979 to democratize the union, while aggressively challenging policies of the Mexican government which it considers harmful to its members and public education more broadly. Both have a higher relative prominence than the UFT or MORE in the prior chapter, for proposing or contesting policy affecting the teachers at the centre of this case study.

I begin here by contextualizing attempts by the Mexican government to decentralize the burgeoning education authority in the 1990s, centred on the Mexico City megapolis, with efforts to curb the power of the SNTE over the system, under the tightening control of Elba Esther

Gordillo (section 6.2). I then describe how the Quality Schools Program (PEC) of President Vicente Fox, while purporting to increase ‘school autonomy’, in fact amounted to centralizing authority at the expense of teachers’ professional autonomy, particularly with the introduction of the ENLACE standardized exam. The extent to which this national policy affected Mexico City schools is assessed (section 6.3).

Next, we consider the 2008 Alliance for Quality Education (ACE) (section 6.4). A product of Gordillo’s increasingly neoliberalized power over education policy, the ACE claimed to rationalize teacher hiring and make continued employment contingent on standardized exams taken by the teachers, and after 2011, the ENLACE. However with the ACE significantly undermined by the continuous opposition of the CNTE, President Enrique Peña Nieto strove again to implement its key policies with his election in 2012 (section 6.5). He exercised an effective scalar strategy which undermined the regionally concentrated basis of the CNTE, including its relative weakness in Mexico City. To do so, he strengthened both transnational policy alliances with the OECD and domestic business lobbyists and opposition parties, while marginalizing the SNTE.

The resulting Ley de Servicio Profesional Docente has had a strong impact on teachers’ professional autonomy by undermining teacher training colleges (section 6.6) and through the use of an exam which does not recognize classroom teaching (section 6.7). All of these measures interact within a context of increasingly precarious employment conditions for Mexico City’s secondary teachers and changing teacher-school director power relations, both affecting their ability to exercise professional autonomy (section 6.8). This chapter concludes by considering

factors behind the uneven response of teachers in Mexico City to national education policies, in relation to more militant teachers in southeastern states (section 6.9).

6.2: Transitions in State Power, Decentralization & Emergence of Elba Esther Gordillo's SNTE as a Key Neoliberal Actor

From the 1990s, Mexico's federalization process occurred within the context of decentralization as the dominant policy idea within education governance in Latin America. As discussed in Chapter 4, this model of governance within the region was circulated through forums hosted by UNESCO and particularly the World Bank, which exercises editorial discretion in cultivating its roster of recommended policies (as described in detail by Peck & Theodore 2015) and offered loans for their implementation (Messina 2008). Messina makes a distinction between decentralization programs initiated from the top down as opposed to in response to popular demands. The latter is motivated by desires for increasing local participation while maintaining central responsibility for funding. The former is more common in both developed and developing countries, and is associated with processes of neoliberalization in which central state funding are typically substituted for private financing. Messina also identifies parallel or subsequent processes of 'recentralization' where the central government reestablishes power through national standardized tests and other top-down policies which have adverse impacts on teachers' professionalism. I argue that this is indeed the direction taken by Mexico's education policy makers from the 2000s onwards, with strong examples found throughout this Chapter including the Quality Schools Program (PEC), the ENLACE exam, the Alliance for Quality Education (ACE) and the Professional Teaching Service Law (Ley de Servicio Profesional

Docente). Policies like these have evoked strong opposition from teachers' unions across Latin America for their impact on working conditions, salary and overall funding, except Messina notes, in Mexico due to the corporatist nature of the SNTE (Messina 2008: 42-43). Resistance here has instead been led primarily by the dissident CNTE.

Secretary of Education Manuel Bartlett significantly furthered decentralization in 1992 with the Acuerdo Nacional para la Modernización de la Educación Básica (National Accord for the Modernization of Basic Education -ANMEB), "to correct the centralism and bureaucratism of the education system." (Marquez 2008: 156). Responsibility for negotiations over teacher salaries and a wider range of economic issues shifted from the federal government to the states, along with oversight of day to day system administration, the ability to add some locally developed course content, and license the growing number of private schools (Brambila 2009: 218-219). The SEP's national offices retained final oversight of programs of study and course curriculum, the free national textbooks, school calendar and teacher education curriculum, among other areas (Marquez 2008: 158; Hecock 2014: 66-67). One of the ANMEB's most direct impacts on teacher professionalism was through a different trajectory of decentralization. The capacity of zone inspectors to evaluate teachers' work was increased by formalizing their oversight over annual exams, and hence the way teachers interpreted the expansive curriculum, in forms which will be described below in relation to the Quality Schools Program (PEC) (Martin 1994: 88-90).

However with the exception of the latter policy, these waves of reforms left Mexico City's school system relatively unaffected. As the Federal District lacked the constitutional powers of Mexico's 31 states, the governance of its basic education system from preschool

through secondary as well as the normales, remained directly under the control of the national SEP (Arnaut 2008). To administer the second largest system after Mexico State, with the largest overall budget, a sub secretary for the DF was created in 1993. It was renamed the Administración Federal de Servicios Educativos en el DF (Federal Administration of Education Services in the Federal District -AFSEDF) in 2005, with new departments for secondary technical schools, and a unified department for the borough of Iztapalapa, by far the city's largest delegation in terms of students, schools and staff (Arnaut 2008: 147).

According to Alberto Arnaut, the DF's education system was not decentralized to the city government partially due to a mutual interest of the SEP and national SNTE leaders not to potentially destabilize the three largest SNTE sections in the country by undermining their subordination to the national union. The position of local dissidents, especially in Section 9 (primary teachers), could have been strengthened if they were able to negotiate directly with a less monolithic city government, governed since 1997 by the centre-left Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). Up until it won constitutional status equal to a state in 2016, the DF government also lacked many of the powers, particularly budgetary ones of states. According to one AFSEDF official, the DF government didn't want the complications of administering nearly 5 000 schools and tens of thousands of teachers (AFSEDF Official 1: Interviewed Feb. 2015). However writing in a publication of the Mexico City government, Messina and Marquez maintain that this has been a goal of the DF, complicated by political differences between its PRD administration and the PRI or PAN-led federal government (Messina 2008; Marquez 2008). The Mexico City government created the Secretaría de la Educación del DF (SEDF) in 2007 to administer its increasing involvement in the provisioning of upper level high school and post

secondary education. According to Arnaut (2008: 152), this created a possibility for eventually taking over responsibility for the city's basic education as well.

The divergent experience of federalization between Mexico City and the rest of the country would contribute to the uneven rollout of national education policies impacting teachers' professional autonomy in the renewed centralism of the 2000s. The potential influence of the CNTE in Mexico City was confined by not being able to negotiate directly with a semi-autonomous subnational authority against which it could apply more pressure than against the national government, especially in the context of the DF's centre-left administration. However in various ways described below, from the quantifiable: Mexico City's relatively favourable education funding levels, to the more nebulous: the politically strategic position of its teachers, the DF was somewhat insulated from the more economically coercive policies which followed from the governments of Fox, Calderon and SNTE leader Elba Esther Gordillo herself. Subsequently, it would also help explain the lesser degree of militancy in Mexico City's Sections 9 and 10, compared to the bastions of the CNTE in the southeast of the country.

Gordillo flexed her growing muscles for the first time on the national stage with the negotiation of the Carrera Magisterial in 1993. At this time early in her tenure as general secretary, Gordillo's control still rested to a strong degree on the consent of the restive membership, earned through winning material gains, rather than its later basis primarily in elite power relations and wealth. Following Hecock's (2014) description, she deployed her institutional influence among state and national political figures from the PRI and the PAN, as well as the SEP, to ameliorate the impact of a typically anti-union, neoliberal policy of merit pay

for some members, both in its establishment and its operation. In the process, Carrera Magisterial effectively consolidated her influence and power over the union's membership and in relation to the government.

The Governments of Salinas and Zedillo developed and implemented Carrera Magisterial, presented to the public as a policy that would to improve the 'quality' of education, under a neoliberal rationality that teachers would work harder if they were rewarded for alleged improvements in their capacities. This was measured 'objectively' through standardized tests of their own competencies and that of their students. It was an "instrumental rationality, against a work ethic based on commitment and loyalty to education as an ends." (Leyva & Rodriguez 2012: 560) [Author's translation]. According to Leyva and Rodriguez (2012: 553), it also had a hidden agenda of slowly transforming labour relations and teachers' culture by contributing to a gradual undermining of the collective nature of the union. This view was supported by a CNTE leader in Mexico City during the 1990s who saw in it a strategy by the government to widely differentiate teacher salaries in order to prevent the kind of groundswell caused by a common low salary which precipitated the 1989 national strike (CNTE Section 10 Activist, Interviewed Feb. 2015). On the basis of its removal of salaries from a common basis of negotiation, it was strongly opposed by the CNTE (Leyva & Rodriguez 2012: 559). Carrera Magisterial was a system of economic incentives achieved by meeting a list of criteria. Seniority and degrees obtained, the traditional basis on which teachers (and many other workers) move up salary scales totalled 25 percent. Completion of professional development was 17 percent, the results of tests measuring professional expertise counted for 28 percent, the evaluation of a supervisor 10 percent, and student test score results, 20 percent (Hecock 2014: 69).

Through Gordillo's successful negotiations, unlike conventional merit pay structures where teachers can see their salaries go up or down annually based on test scores, creating considerable insecurity as described by Ravitch (2013) and Kuhn (2014), salary increases gained through the system would be permanent. Unlike schemes in the US and elsewhere, participation was voluntary, but non-participants would receive smaller negotiated salary increases. The size of the increases offered through Carrera Magisterial would also be negotiated annually with the national SNTE. Teachers who obtained the first level, where 60 percent of participants remained, earned a 24.5 percent increase over their base salary. A further 25 percent ascended to level two, but less than one teacher or school director in two thousand ascended to the fifth and final level, which offered triple the base salary (Hecock 2014: 69). Estimates of the total number of teachers who elected to participate varied widely. Hecock reported about two thirds during the 2000s, while the CNTE activist cited above estimated 40 percent of his colleagues in Mexico City were enrolled, though he said the SEP claims twice this number (Hecock 2014: 69; CNTE Section 10 Activist, Interviewed Feb. 2015). Responsibility for the program's data collection, including performance on teacher tests, student test scores, completion of courses, seniority, was the responsibility of both state and national SEP offices, with the latter tallying results and then sending recommendations for promotion to state governments. At the national level, and in participating states, where administrative capacities and enthusiasm for the program varied widely, the SNTE was able to effectively apply leverage through various underhanded means, according to Hecock's informants in state SEP offices, to influence the passage of teachers into the program, and turn the Carrera into "a potential patronage tool to strengthen the position of union leaders" (Hecock 2014: 69). While the Carrera's original neoliberal objective of removing

teacher compensation from labour negotiations and making it contingent on external variables controlled by the state was to a considerable extent subverted, a shift which surely benefited many teachers, it left them subordinated to another authority. Levinson found that among teachers in Michoacan in the mid-late 1990s, it was entered by some, but “maligned by most, who found it corrupt and divisive.” (Levinson 2001: 239). Aboites observed that the SEP was unable to provide significant evidence to the public that Carrera Magisterial actually increases student achievement, mainly claiming that it provided useful information to the national SEP. Brambila (2009) reached similar conclusions. In this case, Aboites argued, teachers should simply receive regular salary increases (Aboites 2012: 829-830; Hecock 2014: 68-70).

Another initiative bundled with the Carrera Magisterial was a standardized exam on subject knowledge and teaching practices for entry into the teaching profession. It was opposed by the CNTE for undermining the ability of normal schools and faculties of education to determine successful graduates based on a command of pedagogy, on a comprehensive basis not possible on a written test. If implemented transparently, it would also undermine clientelistic practices employed by local SNTE sections and SEP officials of distributing jobs. With each state deciding on whether to participate, according to the Mexican senate, only 13 of 32 were participating by 2003, with only five assigning all new positions through the exam (Senate of Mexico 2016: 3). Its impact was limited. Believers in entrance exams as an effective accessor of teacher quality would push again for its implementation on a national scale through the Alliance for Quality Education (ACE) in 2008.

In 1998, Gordillo responded to the earlier federalization by the SEP of some aspects of salary and benefit negotiations by modifying the formal structure of the SNTE to delegate

matching powers to the state sections, also purporting to grant a degree of recognition of diverse political tendencies of the union. In practice, according to Leyva and Rodriguez (2012), she further consolidated her power. She ensured that the calling of general conventions by which state executives were elected, and the confirmation of the legitimacy of their outcome, continued to rest solely with the national executive, which she controlled. As during the 1980s under Jongitud Barrios, CNTE-led states exerted considerable pressure on the SNTE via the federal government every three years for these conventions to be convened fairly.¹¹⁶ Gordillo's power was demonstrated in 2004, with the creation of the new top position of president, to which she was summarily promoted from general secretary. In 2007, the national SNTE convention suspended the rule prevalent in nearly all arenas of Mexican politics prohibiting reelection or setting strict term limits, allowing her to potentially become 'president for life' (Leyva & Rodriguez 2012: 550-551). Her further entrenchment and sometimes ham fisted efforts to impose her handpicked leaders in state locals, created dissent among a range of otherwise loyal, anti-CNTE officials who saw their own ambitions blocked, or who opposed her rupture with the PRI¹¹⁷. However in 2012 she was appointed to another newly created top position, as president of the 'General Union Council for the Strengthening of Public Education' by unanimous vote of 3230 convention delegates (Bensusan & Middlebrook 2013: 78; Hernandez Navarro 2012: 394-395).

¹¹⁶ The challenges for Gordillo of ensuring that these state congresses delivered their desired results, meant that many locals like Sections 9 and 10 in Mexico City simply did not have internal elections for years (Hernandez Navarro 2012: 395).

¹¹⁷ In a handful of states with governors who also resented Gordillo's power, these leaders succeeded in gaining legal recognition of small splinters from the SNTE, representing a few thousand members. The approximately 4500 teachers of the upper high schools run directly by the Mexico City government also succeeded in gaining legal recognition for the independent SITEM union (Hernandez Navarro 2012: 395; Leyva & Rodriguez 2012: 547).

From this vantage point, Gordillo's "golden age" of power peaked under the PAN governments of Fox and Calderon, intervening in national politics and using her position to endorse the neoliberal reforms of the education sector of her allies, or author them herself. She was widely viewed as the most powerful woman in Mexico. Leyva and Rodriguez describe how under Gordillo, the SNTE distinguished itself from other corporatist unions, by ascending in influence rather than declining with the end in 2000 of the rule of the PRI under which it was nurtured:

The SNTE possesses structural properties on the basis of the number of its members and the nationwide presence of teachers that few unions have. As these are conditions of power, the state has considered it necessary to contain and regulate the SNTE for the political stability of the nation. This statist contention of the SNTE functions the same for all the strategic national unions. The difference is that the teachers' organization has effectively adapted itself to modern political and economic times, maintaining its own corporatist profile, which has given it such good results in surviving neoliberal PRIsta governments. It converted itself into the most powerful union organization in the country and in Latin America during the PANista governments." (Leyva & Rodriguez 2012: 529) [Author's translation from Spanish]

While Gordillo faced some limits on her power under PRI presidents Salinas and Zedillo, by carrying her influence¹¹⁸ over to the PAN she won the gratitude of Fox and Calderon, particularly in the case of the latter's tiny margin of victory, widely viewed in Mexico to have been fraudulent (Bensusan & Middlebrook 2013: 79-80; Hernandez Navarro 2012: 410). In return, she was appointed director of the National Lottery and the social security institute which administers health care and pensions for the nation's public sector employees (ISSSTE). In addition to these

¹¹⁸ Such influence was measured in approximately 10 000 SNTE staff (comisionados) assigned to electoral work, and the support of Gordillo's own political vehicle, the National Alternative Party (PANAL), fully funded by the SNTE and led by her family, whose members, along with a secretary of education and the step-son of Vicente Fox, subsequently became federal senators and deputies. The PANAL alternated its endorsement of presidential and gubernatorial candidates according to Gordillo's strategy. While the PANAL's support never rose above the low single digits, its handful of deputies and senators won through Mexico's proportional representation system also gave the SNTE a bargaining chip in close congressional votes (Leyva & Rodriguez 2012: 552; Bensusan & Middlebrook 2013: 79-81; Hernandez 2013: 150)

patronage posts, she was given real power within the SEP: a veto over the appointment of sub secretaries for basic education and senior administrators of Mexico City's school authority, the AFSEDF (highly strategic in her efforts to gain control over Sections 9 and 10). She had a voice in the presidential appointment of secretaries of education. One, Josefina Vazquez Mota (PAN presidential candidate in 2012), was substituted by Calderon halfway through her term due to conflicts with Gordillo, with a mutually agreeable replacement. To help rehabilitate the negative public image of herself and the SNTE, Calderon's administration subsidized an educational TV program on Televisa¹¹⁹, 'All the world believes in you' oriented to parents and children, in which she and the SNTE were portrayed favourably (Leyva & Rodriguez 2012: 539-542; Bensusan & Middlebrook 2013: 82). The SNTE under Gordillo held far more institutional power within the state (though generally not for the benefit of its members, students or the broader public) than education unions in Toronto, Ontario or New York City or State. In this context, with nearly full support from the SNTE under Gordillo's control, the PAN administrations pursued policies which saw a recentralization of education governance, though changes were less dramatic in federalized Mexico City. However these policies posed serious challenges for the professional autonomy of all Mexican teachers.

6.3: Re-centralized Governance through Competition I: Programa de Escuelas de Calidad (Quality Schools Program -PEC), the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (INEE) & ENLACE

The Quality Schools Program (Programa de Escuelas de Calidad -PEC) was the signature education initiative of the Vicente Fox PAN government of 2001 to 2006. It was expanded

¹¹⁹ The president of the massive entertainment conglomerate's charity arm, Carlos Gonzalez Guajardo, went on to lead Mexicanos Primero, the leading business lobby group on education policy, discussed below.

through the terms of Calderon and Peña Nieto, though in a diminished form. While the program was limited to urban primary schools (excluding kindergartens, secondary schools and the nation's many rural elementary schools), it had a significant impact on the basic education system as a whole. The PEC introduced a large-scale national competitive structure for education funding, an organization external to the SEP to oversee competition in 2002, the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (INEE), and the premise for a national standardized exam for both upper primary and secondary students, the ENLACE, established in 2006. These developments led to a similar trajectory for Mexican teachers as increased emphasis on the Regents Exams and primary school testing in New York under Governor Cuomo made for his state's teachers: a subordination of classroom instruction to the imperative of test preparation and more space for managers (in Mexico's case, zone supervisors more so than school directors) to intervene in pedagogy under the premise of raising scores. The 'School-Based Management' mechanism within PEC also advanced privatization where it succeeded in substituting private financing for federal funding. Each of these initiatives were supported by Elba Esther Gordillo's SNTE, and strongly opposed by the CNTE, to the extent of succeeding in partially or fully exempting states from these programs where the movement was strongest (Leyva & Rodriguez 2012: 555). At the conclusion of this section, I will attempt to assess the specific impact of these national programs on Mexico City.

The PEC consisted of a national competition whereby urban primary schools would compete on the basis of a complex rubric of qualitative and quantitative measures for additional funding to be used according to a proposal authored by the school's director, teachers and interested parents. It promised to improve student achievement as measured in graduation rates

and with ENLACE through standardized test scores. In its first year in 2001, 300 000 peso grants were awarded to 1 500 urban primary schools. In 2004, the grants were halved to 150 000 pesos but extended to 20 000 schools, approximately 1 in 10 of Mexico's 194 775 public kindergartens, primaries and secondary schools, of which 90 000 were considered to be in "deplorable conditions" of repair according to the SEP (Aboites 2012: 839). The total of number of participating primary schools reached 40 000 by 2009 (Aboites 2012: 853). In subsequent years, PEC grants were significantly reduced, declining to 20 000 pesos by 2015 (AFSEDF Official 1: Interviewed Feb. 2015). The analysis below will focus on the first eight years of the program during its greatest influence.

Funding for the PEC was provided by grants and loans from the World Bank (Hernandez Navarro 2013). According to Teresa Bracho, an academic affiliated with the OECD and author of the definitive study commissioned by the SEP and the INEE on the effectiveness of the PEC from 2001-2007, the PEC emerged from ideas developed by education policy makers in the US and UK, subsequently endorsed and circulated in literature by the World Bank and OECD, around 'school quality and effectiveness' and 'social participation'.¹²⁰ The latter was especially described as a hallmark of 'School Based Management' (SBM), increasing parental involvement to identify school needs, and the procurement of private sector support to finance them. Bracho locates the PEC within a continuum of decentralization policies within 1980s to 2000s Mexico:

[Decentralization] implicates combining various levels of government that in a vertical sense are implicated in the operations of programs (national, state, municipal and school-level), with the opening of spaces in a horizontal sense, for the participation of new actors

¹²⁰ With Fox and Gordillo's SNTE sharing an interest in encouraging an official version of 'social participation', the SNTE created a Secretary of Social Participation on its national executive to liaise with civil society groups like the Asociacion de Padres de Familia (Parent's Association) which were given a "corporatist" legitimacy by the Fox government through their representation on various state initiatives (Leyva & Rodriguez 2012: 557).

from private and social sectors, through the reactivation of venues of citizen's participation established in the 1993 General Education Law... As with the receipt of economic support on the part of parents and private organizations in a schema of co-financing (Bracho 2009: 37). [Author's translation from Spanish]

She further distinguishes variations within SBM based on the concentration of decision-making to principals (as in NYC), teachers or parent committees. Integral is the concept of school staff (administrators and teachers) being reflexive about how to improve teaching and whole school practices and collegiality. Power relations between administrators and teachers within these structures are not explicitly defined, though emphasis is made on the importance of both the *quality* of administrative leadership (as in much of the mainstream US education policy literature), and buy-in from teachers (Bracho 2009: 17-39).

I argue that a key question is the line between teachers empowered to exercise their professional judgement through initiatives like SBM to locally identify and respond to the specific needs of their students, and becoming accomplices to the neoliberalization of education by 'taking ownership', often alongside parents, of the systemic under resourcing of schools by the state. Perhaps this distinction can be made at the point where teachers (and parents) accept the use of standardized tests to measure the success of their schools through SBM initiatives as is typically the case. By legitimizing this form of evaluation, the importance of systemic socioeconomic context and the need for greater across the board funding increases is obscured. Instead, a debate on the effectiveness of individual teachers is brought to the foreground, in a zero sum competition for essential resources amid systemic austerity. Parental involvement is manipulated to further the privatization of education when the identification of unmet needs is only to commit to fundraising or pursuing private sector sponsorships to meet them, as Bracho

acknowledges is in fact encouraged under SBM to augment a modest increase in resources from the state (Bracho 2009: 37). In response to these dynamics, the CNTE-led SNTE section of Michoacan argued that the PEC removed the responsibility of the state to provide all schools with essential maintenance funding. In the context of a sympathetic opposition-led (PRD) state government in the 2000s, its proposal for across the board funding increases was enacted in place of the PEC (Leyva & Rodriguez 2012: 556).

In her analysis, Bracho acknowledges that while the additional funds awarded through PEC were originally intended to support initiatives like increased professional development and training for teachers to directly improve classroom instruction and thereby student achievement, in practice, most funding went towards more basic school needs. This was unsurprising, in light of the proportion of schools mentioned earlier in desperate need of such resources by the SEP's own reckoning. How these needs affected both the capacity of teachers to do their work and the students' experience of their school, were clearly visible in visits to this dissertation's case study secondary schools in Mexico City in 2015 and 2016. The fundamental issue of a lack of space in overcrowded schools in working class Iztapalapa, meant that student desks and chairs occupied nearly all the space in each classroom, making it difficult to teach through instructional strategies like group work or differentiated learning circles, or any form not based on neat rows. Teachers were not allowed to use the one photocopier, located in the school's office, and few classroom digital projectors functioned (installed several years ago as part of a technology initiative, but without funding for ongoing maintenance). Both shortcomings tended towards a reliance on teaching through the abundant free textbooks and usage of the whiteboard at the front of every room. However many teachers did demonstrate an ingenuity in classroom activities which

required few costly material resources¹²¹. The most sophisticated technology in each school was a biometric scanner to verify teacher attendance. While peeling paint and dirty windows were common at schools in all three case studies of this dissertation, in Mexico City's schools, most plumbing fixtures appeared to never work and free drinking water was inexistent (the case everywhere in Mexico). There was wireless internet, funded by the Mexico City government. As will be discussed below, with an above average rate of federal funding supplemented by greater municipal funding, physical conditions in Mexico City schools are among the best in the nation (Arnaut 2008).¹²² According to the Citizen's Observatory of Education, two years into the PEC, half of the funds at the school level were used for maintenance and construction. Most of the rest was dedicated to furniture, books and equipment, with only one percent used for the professional development of teachers (Aboites 2012: 837).¹²³

The competition for additional school resources through PEC had significant implications for teachers' professional autonomy. Participation in the PEC involved a substantial increase in workload for teachers, in an evaluative process that was in practice far more prescribed than was

¹²¹ I observed an ethics class accomplished by stacking student desks and chairs in a corner of the room, in order to use rolls of thread tied to bottle caps, each held by individual students, who moved around each other in a lesson in interdependence and cooperation. In a physical education class, students learned and practiced a game devised by the teacher which involved aspects of soccer, jumping through tires and pivoting around steel poles stuck in cement buckets.

¹²² The author met rural teachers from Guerrero, Morelos and Oaxaca in 2015, who described their schools receiving regular electricity only the year prior, and in some cases still lacked indoor plumbing. This makes problematic the use of Mexico City schools as a proxy for national data in studies like the World Bank's *Great Teachers: How to Raise Student Learning in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Bruns & Luque 2014).

¹²³ The combination of the tendency of schools to use much of their funds for facility improvements and the requirement that schools engage in a degree of private fundraising to access the entire 150 000 peso grant was an example of how privatization can be highly lucrative. After the first 50 000 pesos, PEC schools were obliged to obtain some funding from municipal governments, non-profits or the private sector, with this money being met 1 to 1 or 2 to 1 by the federal government, depending on the affluence of the community. Given the limited resources of the first two in most communities outside of Mexico City, Aboites explains that the schools necessarily relied on business sponsorships, and where those could not be obtained, fundraising by the parents. For more affluent schools which provided a bigger market, school supply companies gave donations in return for preferential contracts for desks, projectors, TVs and books to be purchased with PEC funds. A fifth of the PEC magazine was typically devoted to ads for these products (Aboites 2012: 844).

initially portrayed. The school's application for the PEC and its subsequent evaluation by the SEP, required constant staff meetings to write reports on its 10 Specific Objectives:

The teacher ends up subsidizing -with a free increase in their productivity- the resources that arrive at the school from PEC, because the program converts into the extraordinary what should be ordinary: that each school should receive the resources to meet its basic necessities and create the necessary conditions to work (Aboites 2012: 837) [Author's translation from Spanish]

The PEC utilized a progressive discourse described by Bracho, of encouraging participation of teachers, students and parents through horizontal power relations centred on the school site.

However, Hugo Aboites, an academic in education policy, argues that confronted by the established tendency in the Carrera Magisterial towards standardized evaluation, in practice it was highly bureaucratic. As with the NYC's small schools movement, an initially progressive discourse that claimed to empower teachers' professional autonomy and combined it with greater community participation, was in practice, as with 'school choice' and its use of test scores to rate schools, subordinated to structures of neoliberal governance. Schools competed with others in their zone for increases in funding mainly for critical maintenance. Increased centralized control and surveillance through the use of standardized testing determined school applications for entry to PEC. Fox, his secretary of education and the developers of PEC articulated a philosophy of education in which the intrinsic value of learning (for students) and service (for teachers) was an insufficient motivator for improvement. They needed to be pushed by competition for greater resources and the potential for their loss (Aboites 2012: 829, 833-834).

Aboites relates these dynamics to a 'business strategy' of incentivizing worker productivity combined with deskilling, harkening to Frederick Taylor, the father of scientific management theory in the US. Aboites argues that school proposals were obliged to hew closely

to criteria set by program evaluators at the national SEP offices, or risk not getting approved, in contrast to the program's purported objective of empowering local schools which best know local conditions. He cites an example given by the PEC director, of the initial rejection of a proposal from a school in Hidalgo prior to his intervention. Its staff and parents had chosen a focus on improving 'values' due to significant social problems including drug abuse and absenteeism among students, rather than the recommended emphasis on raising math & Spanish test scores (Aboites 2012: 835, 837). Contrary to horizontal collaboration, Aboites found that competition between schools in a local zone for PEC funding discouraged winning schools from sharing their strategies. The competitive structure of applications meant that the neediest schools frequently did not get grants¹²⁴, in a process which tended to favour the most organized schools with strong parental participation and the highest test scores.

The increased importance of exam results, particularly after the creation of the ENLACE in 2006 (discussed below) in PEC applications, increased the relative importance of zone inspectors and regional supervisors [superintendents] of schools in relation to their staff, "It is easy to imagine these supervisors -dependents of a vertical power structure and selected to advise schools in the design of their projects and proposals- pushing a tendency towards the uniformity of these school projects." (Aboites 2012: 843) As in NYC, they now had a rationale for regularly intervening in the classroom. Beneath regional supervisors and immediately above school directors, zone inspectors were responsible for overseeing teaching practices and student evaluation and graduation policies in around a dozen schools, in one of which they had their office. Their authority over teachers' work had grown since the 1980s, when teachers were

¹²⁴ Aboites cites anecdotes of school directors in poor areas not applying to the PEC because the program seemed beyond the reach of their school (Aboites 2012: 837).

required to submit mid year and final exams. Prior to the creation of the national ENLACE exam, zone inspectors gained the power to determine the parameters of a common zonal exam for each grade and subject area, to which teachers would not have access in advance, creating more pressure to teach the curriculum expansively, but due to limits of time and resources, with less depth (Martin 1994: 90-91). From his anthropological observations of secondary schools in Guadalajara and interviews with teachers, Martin describes the role of the inspector:

The basis of the inspector's authority is her forceful pursuit of technical controls on teaching. ... carries with it a particular discourse, a form of intercommunication in the zone with its talk of qualifications, paperwork, tests, competitions... In addition the sheer weight and frequency of work load demands create a momentum from which the teachers find it difficult to escape. Finally, the inspector emanates a strong personal presence, the force of which make the teachers work hard which, due to its all-embracing character, its relative constancy and its depth of penetration can only be described as panoptic (Martin 1994: 91).

Though Martin's observations were made before the 2000's wave of centralization reforms described in this chapter, contemporary comments from Mexico City teachers suggest that it remains accurate for a certain type of inspector, as Martin acknowledges, who owed their position to senior SEP officials. Many zone inspectors and regional supervisors held their positions due more to approval from the sectional SNTE hierarchy under Barrios and Gordillo's control, than their actual employer, making the zeal with which they pursued education reforms highly variable.

The actual process of the PEC evaluation included the following steps. First, teachers and school directors had to self-assess the success of their school in meeting PEC objectives, which were officially claimed to be locally developed, but in practice emerged out of a centrally defined rubric. The 24 primarily qualitative standards included: the usage of differentiated

instruction, degree of teacher planning, extent that teachers support and encourage students to improve, that the director “exercises academic leadership in transforming the school community”, “teachers and directors engage in continual training and self-development”, “teachers encourage the protection of the environment, appreciation for art and good health”, “teach universal values like solidarity, tolerance, honesty and responsibility in the formation of citizenship” and “parents participate in decision-making” (Aboites 2012: 848). SEP central staff then evaluated the extent to which schools met the criteria. This was very difficult and time consuming to do in practice. The SEP reported that these parts of evaluation were completed for less than a quarter of participating schools in the first eight years of the PEC (Aboites 2012: 846). This problem was identified early on by the Fox administration, which attempted to rectify it first with the creation of the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (INEE) in 2002, which as a body autonomous of the SEP would gather, analyze and disseminate data on its functioning, and later through the national ENLACE exam run directly by the SEP. In practice, test scores from the ENLACE, which were easy to compare and quantify, came to be the primary metric of comparison. The initial expanding influence of the ENLACE exam through the PEC will be discussed below.

To what extent did the PEC have a significant impact on teachers and schools in Mexico City? Since the late 1990s, the city government has increasingly covered school construction and maintenance, bursaries and uniforms for students, and other operating costs unrelated to staff

salaries, as the national SEP pulled back its funding (Arnaut 2008: 151).¹²⁵ As a result, parents do not have to make up these costs as they increasingly do in other states. The AFSEDF posts official notices beside the main entrance of every primary and secondary school in Mexico City stating that the institution is completely free, offering a complaints hotline for parents to call if they are told otherwise. However according to Aboites (2012), ‘voluntary’ donations collected by the parent association rather than school staff, still make a significant contribution to the maintenance budget. The sometimes ambiguous line between voluntary and obligatory fees is politically sensitive for education authorities, due to the constitutional stipulation that basic education shall be free.¹²⁶ When explaining that all primaries and secondaries in Mexico City receive a flat amount of 90 000 pesos per year (approximately \$8 500 CAN in 2016) for their non-payroll costs, regardless of the number of students, a senior AFSEDF official acknowledged that this was not a generous sum (AFSEDF Official 1: Interviewed Feb. 2015).

Prior to the re-uploading of direct responsibility for the administration of employee salaries to the national SEP in 2014-15, statistics revealed that the funding provided from the federal government to state authorities for basic education varied drastically. While the average

¹²⁵ The proportion of public GDP shifted from the federal government to states and municipalities rose from 2.8% in 1991 to 4.9% in 1993 and 8.3% by 2006, but little was new funding: “[F]rom the total transfer of resources between authorities (8.3% of GDP in 2006), 3.6% of this GDP corresponds to traditional [funding]; 4.07% are resources the federal government now gave out to pay for downloaded services; and only 0.64% of the GDP are new resources transferred for activities that previously did not exist.” (Marquez 2008: 163) [Author’s translation] GDF funding increased as its relationship with the SEP improved over recent years, reaching a funding parity for maintenance costs of 600 million pesos each in 2016 (AFSEDF Official 1: Interviewed Feb. 2015).

¹²⁶ When asked about school fees *in other states*, a senior AFSEDF official was quick to emphasize that they were not the policy of state or federal authorities: “That was distorted... school was always free. But there were many necessities for school maintenance that were not met, that some [school] directors started to take the decision to ask for voluntary fees. Over time they became almost obligatory. And now we’ve returned to say no to requiring any parent to give a fee. Other parents can ask them, not the director, so that it’s not an obligation that their child to receive their grades, must pay.” (AFSEDF Official 1: Interviewed Feb. 2015) [Author’s translation] This official’s disavowal of any role of policy makers for requiring voluntary fees would seem to contradict the requirements of the PEC in practice, if not the written letter, given its requirement that parents and school staff obtain supplementary funding, and that in many circumstances they are unable to do so from municipal or business sources.

per pupil funding in 2005 was 8 767 pesos, the AFSEDF received 13 530 pesos, the fourth highest among 32 states, with the adjacent jurisdiction of Mexico State, large portions of which are also highly urbanized, receiving the lowest rate at 5 467 pesos (Marquez 2008: 179).¹²⁷ Despite that the DF's share of federal funding for basic education declined from 10 percent in 1998 to 8.3 percent in 2006, both a relative and real decline (Marquez 2008: 180), Mexico City schools were still better funded than most.

In his anthropological study of the students of a secondary school in small town Michoacan in the 1990s, US academic Bradley Levinson describes an overall ethos of equity and an emphasis on human development, "There is a greater concern with educating the whole person in the secundaria. Students learn more about the art of getting along and appreciating the world. In the United States, subject matter reigns supreme." (Levinson 2001: xv) Academic competition, as through test scores, was deemphasized. Secundarias are not streamed on the basis of academic ability, meaning that like in their primary schools, students move with a cohort through most of their classes over three years. However general secondaries offer the most direct route to continuing upper high school education and eventually applying to university, while technical secondaries offer more workshop classes, and are more oriented to being the terminal institution (Levinson 2001: 27). The latter are more likely to be found in rural areas, or in poorer and working class areas of cities, representing a certain degree of geographic streaming. In 2015, Mexico City had 539 public general secondary schools, employing 73 percent of secondary

¹²⁷ Most of the states, aside from the DF, with the highest rates of per pupil funding were in the north and the Yucatan peninsula. Large central states like Mexico State (the largest school system in Mexico, followed by the DF), Veracruz and Puebla fared worst. States in which the CNTE controlled the union were slightly above average. The simplest explanation would be that it was in line with the north, the Yucatan and DF having the highest costs of living during this period. The northern states and some in the Yucatan were also governed by the PAN during this period in which the same party was in the national presidency.

teachers, 200 technical secondaries which employed 23 percent, and 47 *telesecundarias* (small schools predominantly located in rural areas, which lacking a teaching staff large enough to cover all subject areas, deliver some classes by television), employing 1 percent (SEP 2015). In Mexico as a whole in 2009-10, 56 percent of secondary teachers worked in general secondaries, 25 percent in technical secondaries and 17 percent in *telesecundarias* (Hernandez, Llamas & Garro 2012: 324)

In this context, the INEE was established with the purported objective of being a ‘transparent’ gatherer of information about the national education system, ‘autonomous’ from the SEP (and thereby the SNTE). It would interlocute with the OECD and the World Bank in the analysis and reporting of statistics. Its testing function was initially promoted by Fox’s government as a less intensive version of the controversial university entry exam Ceneval. It would merely provide indicators of the status of education in Mexico. However its role expanded with the ENLACE, and later the Ley de Servicio Profesional Docente:

Faithful to its character as a centre of evaluation. Once it began to generate its own exams, it attempts (though maintaining an enormous ambivalence in its discourse) to convert itself into the great judge that apart from the testing of students, determined the most successful [states], which schools lagged, and ultimately, which teachers are the most efficient... (Aboites 2012: 828) [Author’s translation].

The chair of the board of directors of the INEE was appointed by the Mexican president. Most directors were functionaries from various education authorities, plus representatives of the Citizen’s Observatory of Education (OCE) NGO, various parent groups, business lobbyists and religious groups (Aboites 2012: 859). Complaint from Elba Esther Gordillo promptly won the SNTE a seat at the table (Leyva & Rodriguez 2012: 556).

Following unsuccessful attempts through the INEE to implement a national exam which would be used to assess PEC schools and incorporated into the Carrera Magisterial as a criteria for salary increases (a form of merit pay), the ENLACE exam was created directly by the SEP in 2006. The INEE would not return to prominence in education governance until it was effectively relaunched by Enrique Peña Nieto's government as its primary testing vehicle. ENLACE annually tested approximately 16 million students from year three of primary through the three years of secondary. As with similar tests in Canada and the US, it tested language comprehension (Spanish) and math, alternating a third subject such as history or science. It consisted of 150 multiple choice questions. In its first iteration, results were used by the INEE to create tables of the 'top 500' primary and secondary schools in Mexico and to rank education achievement of each state. That students in rural Indigenous and poorer communities had consistently lower scores, was acknowledged by the SEP. With arguments similar to Ravitch (2013) and Kuhn (2014) in the US context, for Aboites this demonstrated the inherent flaw of standardized exams across incredible national diversity, that comparing impoverished rural schools with schools in Mexico City's elite Polanco neighbourhood was unfair, and would yield predictable results. ENLACE received criticism from state government representatives who objected to the ranking of their schools as dismal without additional federal resources. Academics cited the experience of the Chilean education system (a 'school choice' structure similar to NYC), in which schools with high marks are inundated with applications and can choose their students, perpetuating high scores (Aboites 2012: 863). Implementation of the ENLACE faced significant resistance and sporadic blockage from teachers within states where the CNTE was dominant, or others like Puebla, where Gordillo was weaker within the local SNTE (Aboites 2012: 846).

ENLACE's focus on testing Spanish and mathematics placed a mounting weight within the curriculum for increases in student grades in these subjects, just as in New York, to the detriment of teaching in non-tested areas. To increase class time dedicated to Spanish and math in secondary schools, the RIES reform reduced history and civics classes and combined physics, biology and chemistry courses. There was a greater intervention by administrators in monitoring the pedagogy of teachers in accordance with published guidelines for optimal forms of test preparation. The SNTE objected to potential job losses from closing courses and the use of disciplinary power against teachers who stubbornly tried to maintain their classroom autonomy, but didn't challenge the context behind this undermining of teachers' pedagogy and professional autonomy (Leyva & Rodriguez 2012: 557).

Under Fox, Gordillo held a veto over education policy. She never appeared to harbour strong disagreements based on principle or ideology, raising objection when her institutional power could possibly be undermined, as with the initial establishment of the INEE. The PEC and the ENLACE exam were given her blessings, despite their ability to undermine the professional autonomy of her members and equity in education more broadly. Under the Calderon administration, in the context of mounting criticisms of the national education system from the left and the right, she took her combination of a pragmatic willingness to accommodate to the neoliberal drift, and her apparently primary desire to further consolidate her own power, to become according to Hernandez (2013), the "central protagonist" of education policy.

6.4: Re-centralized Governance through Competition II: Alianza por la Calidad Educativa (Alliance for Quality Education -ACE)

Elba Esther Gordillo's transition from clientelistic populism in the 1990s (exemplified by her negotiation of the Carrera Magisterial) to a consistently neoliberal politics sustained by elite alliances, culminated in her central role in the development and implementation of the Alliance for Quality Education (Alianza por la Calidad Educativa -ACE) in 2008. The means by which this program innovated in the neoliberalization of the teaching profession, disrupting practices representing alternately the legacies of corporatist clientelism and Mexico's welfare state, are described in this section. Along the way we see the full realization of standardized student evaluation through the ENLACE, on a national scale beyond the aspirations of No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top in the US, but in a manner that was ultimately fatal. Also discussed are the tremendous resistance it provoked among CNTE and non-CNTE teachers alike, which undermined the ACE and set the context for the next president, Enrique Peña Nieto's more successful strategy.

An important antecedent marked Gordillo's thoroughly neoliberal shift. As the ultimate authority over the public sector social security institute (ISSSTE), responsible for the health care and pensions of the nation's active and retired government employees, in 2007 she presided with new PAN president Felipe Calderon, in its conversion from a defined benefit pension plan to individualized defined contribution savings accounts. Her centrality in the change was emphasized by both the SNTE and the CNTE, the latter naming it 'Gordillo Law'. It provoked massive opposition among teachers as the largest group of affected public sector workers, re-galvanizing the CNTE in both its bases and with new supporters in northern states. However

despite sustained massive demonstrations, Supreme Court and International Labour Organization legal challenges, strikes and occupations of SEP and ISSSTE buildings by the CNTE, and the insertion of grandfathering clauses, the shift was ultimately successful (CNTE Section 10 Activist: Interviewed Feb. 2015; Hernandez Navarro 2012: 345-351; Leyva & Rodriguez 2012: 560).

The emergence of an increasingly vocal business lobby on education policy with considerable influence in Calderon's right wing administration created the context for Gordillo's neoliberal turn. Mexicanos Primero (Mexicans First) was quietly founded in 2005 by a small group of socially conservative cabinet members in the PAN government and business leaders, led by Claudio X. González, son of the billionaire magnate of Kimberly Clarke Mexico and Alejandro Ramírez Magaña son of the owner of Cinépolis, Mexico's largest cinema chain. As described above in Chapter 4, its policies and tactics closely resembled those of its contemporaries in the US. Hernandez Navarro described Mexicanos Primero as the "front group of the business rightwing on education issues" (2012: 422) [Author's translation]. It made its first major public intervention in 2007 with the release of *Brechas: estado de la educación en México 2010*, a report which citing test score results from the first years of ENLACE, described the education system as "mediocre" and accused the SNTE of coddling weak teachers. Its publication garnered significant government and media attention. Mexicanos Primero also presented awards to individual teachers for furthering a 'more humanist' vision of education, despite their union, while issuing public statements denouncing the majority of teachers as 'lazy, selfish' (Hernandez Navarro 2012: 419). Its influence in Mexican education policy would grow considerably in setting the terms for mainstream debate. Meanwhile school physical plants

deteriorated amid the expansion of secondary schools due to rising enrolment and retention, often poorly constructed and maintained, with a high impact on conditions for working and learning. However, these issues garnered little attention from either business leaders or the SEP and Gordillo in their diagnosis of problems facing the nation's education system (Leyva & Rodriguez 2012: 560).

On May 15, the Mexican Day of the Teacher in 2008, flanked by Calderon, 26 state governors and an assortment of business leaders and bishops, Gordillo introduced the Alliance for Quality Education (ACE) initiative (Hernandez Navarro 2012: 353). Leyva and Rodriguez (2012) argue that the ACE was in part about demonstrating the “harmonious relationship” between the SNTE and the federal government, while excluding the CNTE as a legitimate national actor. They contend that the ACE was arguably more a product of the SNTE than the SEP, a view shared by Hernandez Navarro (2013). “It was more than the continuation of the act of signing pacts as a *media show*, it is the true expression of the power of the SNTE.” [Author's translation] concluded Leyva and Rodriguez (2012: 557-558). They argued that:

The SNTE adapted to the new economic and political conditions of the country and so as it was an active collaborator with the educator state, now it was with the neoliberal state, without its nucleus losing control of the workers it conceded to the education authorities initiatives that tended to weaken its own power in the long term and at the same time undermine working conditions (Leyva & Rodriguez 2012: 563). [Author's translation].

The ACE covered three principal areas. Curriculum changes emphasized “citizenship, productivity and competitiveness” with an emphasis on the latter two, which Leyva and Rodriguez argue, corresponded with a de-emphasis on cooperation, humanism and cultural diversity. Also present were measures resembling the PEC's promotion of public-private partnerships through ‘School-Based Management, to ostensibly improve school infrastructure

and student health. These consisted of technology procurement and outsourced food contracts (replacing school run snack shops), with parent committees encouraged to obtain private support to match public funds. Long hostile to the public normal schools which had served as principal incubators for the teachers' movement, Gordillo described them as "unemployment factories" and recommended they be privatized and turned into tourism and hospitality training colleges (Hernandez Navarro 2012: 382-386). Hernandez Navarro observed that, "The ACE opened for private interests and non-profits, an enormous space to participate in the running of schools through school councils, and from there to create political clients. For this, the employer councils were enthusiastic for it." (Hernandez Navarro 2012: 428) [Author's translation].

The clause which provoked the greatest contention was titled "Evaluar para mejorar" (Evaluate to Improve). It proposed standardized evaluation processes for new teaching positions, temporary and low seniority teachers to obtain permanent status, and for promotions (Leyva & Rodriguez 2012: 558). In the process, it not only removed the right of successful graduates of the nation's publicly run normal schools to a teaching position, it removed graduation from a normal school or a university faculty of education as a mandatory prerequisite for obtaining a teaching position (Hernandez Navarro 2012: 356-357). A bachelor's degree in a relevant subject area and passing the teaching application exam would now be sufficient (Bocking 2015: 81).

This clause would have a profound impact on teachers' employment in several ways. It increased the precariousness of teachers whose continued employment would now be conditional on passing an exam. Leyva and Rodriguez (2012) contend that this undermined the importance of experience and performance in the classroom, a more accurate measure of professionalism, for

newer and temporary teachers in their trajectory towards permanent employment. The teaching position exam also purported to eliminate long standing and much criticized practices in many regions of the country where a retiring teacher could pass on their position to their son or daughter, or potentially for a price, recommend someone else for the position. Alternately, teaching positions were awarded by school directors, other administrators or union officials as a form of patronage. The argument that open competitions for jobs and promotions via exams would increase the system's professionalism was an easy sell in the context of popular awareness of corruption and declining social acceptability of nepotism¹²⁸ (Leyva & Rodriguez 2012: 562).

'Evaluate to Improve' would actually undermine the professionalism of teachers. The removal of normales and other faculties of education as mandatory prerequisites was based on the notion that teacher abilities in pedagogy, instruction, child and adolescent development and classroom management were basic skills that could be initially evaluated on a standardized exam and further developed on the job. They did not require years of professional study and training beforehand. From this point of view, the particular professional characteristics of teachers, beyond the subject area knowledge an accountant would bring to the teaching of math, or an engineer to science, were thin indeed. Leyva and Rodriguez describe how these changes led to the deprofessionalization and precarization of teachers:

...flexibility in teachers' labour had the potential to corrode the character of the teachers... developing individualist attitudes. From solitary unshared work; it increases the anxiety, fear and grades of stress, with consequent physical and psychological consequences... it removes the obligation of the state to train and professionally prepare teachers, because now they will have to pay for their own training; it reduces vacation time in the summer from time teachers spend in courses and diplomas as part of their

¹²⁸ While the practice of inheriting teaching positions was certainly unfair, the author should mention that two friends obtained their positions from retiring parents, and that by available evidence including visits to their schools and meeting their students, they are skilled and committed educators.

certifications; it intensifies and increases the hours in the teachers' work day. In other terms, the reform implicates the spending and investment of money and time in the search of professionalization, masking a complete process of deprofessionalization of teachers. (2012: 562-563). [Author's translation]

Several key impacts then, gave a significant section of teachers personal reasons to be strongly opposed to the provisions of the ACE, a policy whose originators could be easily identified: Elba Esther Gordillo and the federal government of Felipe Calderon. 3 500 teachers in Morelos, 15 percent of the profession in this state, were on the verge of retirement when the ACE passed in 2008 (Hernandez Navarro 2012: 356-357). It became a key site for teacher militancy, where Gordillo's loyalists were swept out of union leadership. The CNTE emphasized the deprofessionalizing aspects in its opposition to the ACE, particularly the degradation of the role of normal schools and the dubiousness of a standardized written exam for assessing teacher quality. The movement charged that administration of the exam lacked transparency, and could be manipulated by the SNTE and the SEP in favour of their preferred candidates (Leyva & Rodriguez 2012: 562). Fierce resistance emerged from both CNTE-led sections as well as several traditionally pro-institutional sections of the SNTE which broke ranks with Gordillo, including Baja California Sur, Coahuila, Morelos, Zacatecas, Durango, Puebla and Quintana Roo. In all, 400 000 teachers in 14 states participated in strikes at various times over 2008-2009 in opposition to the ACE. In the most successful instances, teachers built alliances with parent groups concerned about school fees and commercialization, and campesinos engaged in their own struggles for land rights in states like Morelos and Chiapas with deep roots of rural collective struggle. In states with the most organized opposition, teachers refused to carry out aspects of the ACE. They blocked the administration of the ENLACE or the OECD's new PISA

exam, which served for many dissident teachers as a manifestation of the international dimension of the neoliberal education agenda. The high levels of resistance created a crisis for Gordillo, who dealt with it by tightening control over the SNTE. National congresses now met in secret locations, conventions to elect executives of state sections were postponed (Hernandez Navarro 2012: 388). While the host site for countless national mobilizations, which drew the participation of their active members, the CNTE was not sufficiently organized in Mexico City's Sections 9 or 10 to lead citywide strikes, though Section 9's strong presence in many primary schools did lead to parents joining marches and protests.¹²⁹

However, amid the growing and disparate mass movement united in its opposition to the ACE, a formal division opened among the dissidents of the teachers' union. In July 2008, just two months after the inauguration of the ACE, movement activists from across Mexico gathered in the capital to launch the Democratic National Executive (CEND) of the SNTE. While sharing many principles and sympathizers, the CNTE did not recognize the new organization (Hernandez Navarro 2012: 432-435; Leyva & Rodriguez 2012: 547). For years before, the CNTE's difficulties in organizing effective mass protests at the national scale had been further hindered by the frequent inability of the leadership of its largest state sections to agree on shared strategies or dates for mobilization. The CEND initially emerged out of schisms between the leaderships of CNTE sections which had successfully gained some power in Michoacan and Guerrero (the former alienated the latter in pushing ahead with the CEND) from those of Oaxaca, Chiapas and the DF.¹³⁰ The dissident leaders of Michoacan aligned themselves with non-CNTE activists in

¹²⁹ Author's observations and conversations with participants.

¹³⁰ Possessing the greatest institutional stability and concomitantly the most resources, the Oaxacan section had long held the most power within the CNTE. Observers believe this is a crucial reason behind the federal government's focusing of juridicial repression on this section from 2013 onwards.

the state sections of Puebla, Morelos, Tlaxcala, Mexico State, and San Luis Potosi, among others, who were disgruntled with the ACE and the pension reforms overseen by Gordillo the previous year (Hernandez Navarro 2012: 439-445; Cervantes Pérez 2012). The CNTE of Section 9 issued a statement refusing in its terms, “to negotiate with charro leaders and betray the alliance policies of the CNTE.” (Cervantes Pérez 2012). The CEND launched with great fanfare amid over 1600 delegates representing membership factions from most of the SNTE’s sections (with the notable exceptions of Oaxaca, Chiapas and the DF) led by Michoacan. Its supporters campaigned intensely within the CNTE, to which it still claimed affiliation. However, it suffered division between non-CNTE leaders whose goal was the creation of a national education union parallel to the SNTE, and the majority of dissidents from within the CNTE who insisted on struggling to democratize the existing union.¹³¹ Following the election of new leaders within the SNTE of Michoacan in 2011 who strongly backed the CNTE, the CEND shrank to largely coalesce among the non-CNTE, anti-Gordillo leadership of the Puebla, Morelos and San Luis Potosi sections (Cervantes Pérez 2012). Dissidents grouped in both the official CNTE and the CEND maintained a steadfast opposition to the ACE, both claiming that fighting Gordillo and the neoliberal agenda for education was their primary objective, decrying sectarianism. Speculatively, it is however, difficult to see how these internal divisions did not undermine opposition against their powerful opponents, particularly their capacity to construct a cohesive resistance at the national level capable of fatally undermining the federal scope of the ACE.

Gordillo pushed to intensify the impact of the ACE on teacher evaluations. In 2011 the SNTE proposed a modification of the Carrera Magisterial that would raise the portion of teacher

¹³¹ Other axes of conflict, included electoral participation with Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, as 2012 presidential candidate for the PRD, and afterwards through his new party, MORENA (Cervantes Pérez 2012).

pay increases based on the results of their students' test scores on the ENLACE from 20 percent to 50 percent (Leyva & Rodriguez 2012: 560; Hecock 2014: 69). With the overwhelming opposition it elicited from her own members, whose incomes became dependant on a standardized multiple choice test to which they had to orient much of their classroom instruction, the SNTE leader seemed to be taking one more step away from her earlier populist base to embrace the avant garde of neoliberal policy. The primary purpose of the ENLACE, rather than a national indicative of student achievement as its advocates initially claimed, was to act as a form of Value Added Measurement, in the manner described in the previous chapter relating to New York, which would further discipline teachers. According to Aboites, the pressures created by the salary incentive had particularly harmful consequences for meaningful student learning as it:

Pressured teachers to create a climate of bureaucratic demands within their classrooms, totally counterproductive to a true education process, it increased the use of fraudulent practices -like the 'loan' of children from one classroom to another when the evaluations arrived -and increased un-pedagogic strategies to train the children to answer on the exams (Aboites 2012: 831). [Author's Translation]

However, teachers with the CNTE claimed victory in the spring of 2012, when combined with a new wave of mobilization, tens of thousands refused the ACE's mandated teacher exams and did not face reprisals. As part of the mobilizations, Mexico City's primary school teachers in the CNTE Section 9 conducted hundreds of classes and activities the city's downtown Zocalo to demonstrate an alternative pedagogy, with the participation of an estimated 20 000 parents and students. These teachers actively redefined their role, demonstrating the value and importance of their professional autonomy to the public (Hernandez Navarro 2013: 199-202). Meanwhile, it soon became evident to both critical education researchers like Aboites and administrators within the SEP, that the efforts by individual or small groups of teachers to try to 'game' the ENLACE

were so extensive, that the validity of the exam was fatally compromised on a national level (AFSEDF Official 1: Interviewed Feb. 2015; Hugo Aboites: Interviewed Feb. 2015). As SEP officials evidently saw no way to effectively bring its administration under their control, the national ENLACE exam for millions of students in years 3 to 6 of primary school and 7 to 9 of secondary was scrapped in 2013. While the CNTE steadily protested the ENLACE and blocked its administration in Oaxaca, Michoacan and elsewhere, it appears that countless unorganized individual acts of sabotage were the most effective. The test was partially revived by the INEE and renamed 'Planea' in 2015 on a much reduced scale for grades six and nine, the final years of primary and secondary school. It was used in 2015 to identify for intervention schools with positive or negative results outside the mean of their area (AFSEDF Official 1: Interviewed Feb. 2015).

Insurgencies from the grassroots and middle ranks in state sections across the country threatened not only Gordillo's control of the union, but her ability to effectively enact education policy in cooperation with the SEP. In the arena of elite politics she continued to consolidate her position, successfully playing the 2010 midterm elections through the PANAL to back a winning selection of PRI or PAN-PRD candidates in most states. As Calderon's PAN fell in the polls leading up to the 2012 presidential election,¹³² she sought a rapprochement with the projected restorer of PRI rule, Enrique Peña Nieto (Hernandez Navarro 2012: 415-418). While making education reform a priority of his administration, Peña Nieto quickly demonstrated that he was uninterested in her partnership. His policies would not be a significant departure from the ACE. However, he rapidly demonstrated an understanding of some of the scalar reasons behind its

¹³² In great measure due to extreme levels of violence and chaos in vast regions of the country caused by his government's exacerbation of inter-drug cartel conflict.

defeat due to the concentrated strength of dissident teachers and acted accordingly to further centralize the administration of education policy in Mexico. The results would provide the CNTE with their greatest challenge to date.

6.5: Enrique Peña Nieto and Fast Policy

The rapid series of events in the year following the election of President Enrique Peña Nieto in 2012, provide a textbook case of ‘fast policy’ (Peck & Theodore 2015), revealing a fascinating convergence of actors in the production of neoliberal education policy. Advancing beyond the failures of the Fox and Calderon administrations in education policy, Peña Nieto in large measure reversed the earlier federalization of the system in his drive to firmly entrench the policies introduced in the ACE. He sought to do so in a manner that they could not be defied on a regional basis by the CNTE, which had had the effect of undermining the credibility of education governance on a national level. In doing so, he ruptured old political alliances in education governance and formed new ones. This section will first provide a brief narrative chronology of the events surrounding the launch of Peña Nieto’s education reform to introduce the key actors and their convergence, and will then discuss their relative influence.

The several point margin of Peña Nieto’s victory in July 2012 provided him with the impetus to begin formulating his agenda.¹³³ Following confirmation of his election in September, he announced a transition team on education policy led by Mexicanos Primero chair Claudio X. Guajardo, who had become the nation’s most prominent business advocate of education policy.

¹³³ Allegations of fraud were pushed forward by the student movement #YoySoy132 that had emerged to oppose his candidacy, but he was largely able to maintain his legitimacy at this time in contrast to the mass protests that followed his predecessor’s widely viewed to be fraudulent victory for months.

As President-Elect, Peña Nieto visited the OECD headquarters in Paris the following month, where he met extensively with its chair and former PRI politician Jose Angel Gurría, over several days. In September, the OECD had released the policy document *Getting it Right: Strategic Reforms for Mexico*, with basic education part of its primary focus. Its recommendations, which overlapped with Mexicanos Primeros', were consistent with the dominant trajectory in education discourse, centred on increasing the evaluation of teachers with the aim of undermining their permanent employment status, measures largely found in the ACE (Bocking 2015: 78-79). All of this is an attack on the professional autonomy of Mexican teachers.

Recommendations from both organizations were reflected in Peña Nieto's proposals for education presented on December 2, a day after being sworn into office. Beforehand, he had prepared extensive groundwork to ensure these and several other major reforms would pass rapidly through congress. The leadership of the 'Pact for Mexico', a grand coalition of the three largest parties, the PRI, PRD and the PAN, had agreed behind closed doors to pass substantive legislation during the first few months of Peña Nieto's term on basic education, labour law, the tax code and privatization of the energy sector (Hernandez 2013: 27-31). Cooperation from Gordillo's PANAL was not essential. On December 10, 2012 amendments to Articles 3 and 73 of the Mexican Constitution were moved in congress, stipulating that teachers' employment would be contingent on evaluation, exempting public primary and secondary teachers from labour law that covered all other employees. The amendments passed on December 21, 2012 with support from the Pact, and entered law on February 6, 2013 (Bocking 2015: 78-79; Arriaga 2013: 13-14; Bensusan & Middlebrook 2013: 84; Aboites 2015: 4-5).

Peña Nieto's new alliance with the business leaders of Mexicanos Primero, the OECD led by Angel Gurría and the Pact for Mexico, had won its first victory in implementing its vision for education. Gordillo's isolation as a power broker, first signalled by Peña Nieto's appointment of an unfriendly education secretary, would end with her total downfall. Recognizing she had been sidelined, Gordillo denounced the education reforms for their adverse impact on teachers' employment, threatening to mobilize the membership of the SNTE in opposition. Her performance was unconvincing. Earlier in 2012 during an interview with *Milenio* newspaper, Gordillo endorsed Peña Nieto's campaign promises to make the permanent status of teachers conditional upon passing regular tests, criticizing politicians who disagreed, "Permanence perverts proper evaluation, it goes against evaluation..." (Quoted in Hernandez Navarro 2013: 144) [Author's translation]. According to Hernandez Navarro (2013), being such a consistent neoliberal advocate through the governments of Zedillo, Fox and Calderon to enhance her own political standing, regardless of its impact on her members, she was unable to change gears when she realized the fix was in. Less than a month after the passage of the constitutional amendments, Gordillo was imprisoned on February 26, charged with the embezzlement of hundreds of millions of pesos in union funds.¹³⁴ An opinion poll reported that 80 percent of the public and 84 percent of teachers approved of her arrest (Bensusan & Middlebrook 2013: 86; Hernandez Navarro 2013: 263; Bocking 2015: 82). Gordillo's status as one of Mexico's last great *charro*

¹³⁴ SNTE union dues estimated at 2 billion pesos annually in 2005, were directed to the national executive which Gordillo controlled (Leyva & Rodriguez 2012: 543). However according to Mexican sociologist Enrique de la Garza Toledo and Hernandez Navarro, the real money and potential for corruption within the SNTE came from large funds entrusted to it by the federal government. In 2007 Gordillo oversaw 13.5 billion pesos (equivalent to the UNAM's annual budget) for retirement programs, school technology initiatives and teacher home financing programs with little transparency (Enrique de la Garza Toledo: Interviewed Feb. 2015; Hernandez Navarro 2012: 414).

union power brokers, a holdover from the corporatist era of the PRI, whose deft manoeuvring had gained her an extension on life through the administrations of Fox and Calderon, was over.

Under Peña Nieto, a significant realignment occurred in the composition of the political alliances behind education governance in Mexico. On the Mexican left and within the CNTE, considerable attention has been given to the involvement of the OECD. This is consistent with a foundational nationalist narrative within the left that frames opponents of neoliberalism as patriots and its advocates aligned with the OECD or the World Bank as foreign controlled, and complicit in imperialism, usually American in origin.¹³⁵ Mexico entered the OECD in 1994, shortly after the inauguration of the North American Free Trade Agreement, as the first developing nation to join the 'organization of rich countries'. Through the tenures of Fox and Calderon, it enrolled in the OECD's increasing focus on education policy by participating in its international standardized test, the PISA since 2000, and in policy sharing forums. However it was under Peña Nieto's administration that this collaboration drew much closer for both the elaboration of policy and in winning popular legitimation. Peña Nieto and Angel Gurría's close political affinities were likely influential. A member of the technocrat wing of the PRI that came to power in the late 1980s with Carlos Salinas, Gurría was his chief negotiator for NAFTA, followed by secretary of foreign affairs and then finance in the Zedillo administration. After being appointed to the OECD in 2006 with Fox's endorsement, he had only a nominal relationship with Calderon's PAN government. His collaboration with Peña Nieto became known within months of his election, with the President-Elect declaring, "I propose that the OECD become a strategic ally for the design of the policies that Mexico needs, and what greater

¹³⁵ A view often shared by US leftists, see for example Emily Keppler (2016). "Popular Uprising Backs Striking Teachers in Southern Mexico," *Labor Notes*. July 14. www.labornotes.org [Accessed July 17, 2016].

contribution than to have a friend at the head of this organization.” (Jiménez 2012). Gurría replied in the forward to *Getting it Right*, that “the new Mexican government should consider the OECD an extension of its own capacities.” (OECD 2013: 4). Even still, the OECD’s role largely consisted of acting as a prestigious third party legitimator for policies already in circulation, in a fashion described above in Chapter 4. Gurría and his staff gave Peña Nieto recommendations similar to those he received from Guajardo, some of which found their way into the constitutional amendments and later legislation. However this occurred with the free volition of the Mexican government. Peña Nieto was not “under the orders of the OECD” as many of his critics claimed. As Brenner, Peck and Theodore argue:

...it is problematic to assume that neoliberalization processes normally or necessarily move ‘downwards’ along a global-to-national vector....this superordinate gaze fails to take account of the strategic role of national, regional and local state apparatuses as active progenitors of neoliberalizing institutional reforms and policy prototypes, and as arenas in which market oriented regulatory experiments are initiated, consolidated and even extended. (Brenner et al 2010: 195-196).

Amid growing protests over the summer from the CNTE, which with the temporary silencing of the official SNTE, became the primary voice for the growing ranks of teachers anxious about how the reforms would affect their employment, the Professional Teaching Service Law (Ley de Servicio Profesional Docente) was passed in September 2013, putting the constitutional reforms into practice. The 2013-14 school year began with a massive wave of teacher strikes and protests in 27 of the 32 states, led by the CNTE but also drawing out previously unaligned teachers in new regions. It culminated in weeks long ‘indefinite’ strikes in the CNTE’s southern strongholds and strikes for days at a time in the Yucatan, Veracruz and the northern states, where teachers rapidly mobilized despite a limited history of organization. The

highway blockades, mega marches, and occupations of airports, international borders, government buildings and Mexico City's Zocalo, rivalled the national strike wave of 1989 for its geographic breadth. By early November, the movement won vague agreements from state governments where the struggle had been strongest, to work around the federal dictate for a standardized testing regime for teachers, often combined with firmer commitments to hire more teachers or meet community demands to cancel proposed school fees¹³⁶. However concurrent negotiations at the national level between the CNTE and the Secretary of the Interior (Secretaría de Gobernación) for the abrogation of the reforms yielded no gains. By early 2014, unlike with the defeat of the ACE two years earlier, state governments that had made side agreements with the CNTE came under strong pressure from federal authorities, which filed successful claims with the Supreme Court that they were in abeyance of the national constitution. These states soon reneged on their agreements (Aboites 2015: 2-5; Aristegui Noticias 2014; Bocking 2015: 93-93). In this context, the CNTE and the dissident teachers retreated from the national scale, to try to win exemptions in their strongest bases (Maria de la Luz Arriaga: Interviewed Jun. 2015). Peña Nieto's scalar strategy of re-centralizing control over education policy to the national level by embedding reforms in the Mexican constitution were proving successful. The new evaluation program began its roll out in most states the following school year, with the standardized testing of existing teachers beginning in the 2015-16 school year. What did these new evaluation structures look like and how did they affect the teaching careers and professional autonomy of those under its examination?

¹³⁶ Continuing the 'School-Based Management' policy trajectory from the Quality Schools Program (PEC), related legislation had given state governments authority to download school operations costs to families, garnering fierce opposition from organized parents where it was attempted in Chiapas, Veracruz and elsewhere, and helping broaden the struggle beyond the professional interests of teachers (Aboites 2015: 5).

6.6: What Makes a Teacher? Marginalization of the Normales and Teacher Education

On the evening of September 26, 2014,¹³⁷ dozens of students from the Ayotzinapa Teachers' College in the state of Guerrero commandeered five buses to travel to Mexico City and participate in marches against what they contended was discrimination in teacher hiring by the SEP against the graduates of public rural normal schools and the favouring of alumni of private urban university programs. Their struggle was within the context of Enrique Peña Nieto's reforms and its predecessors, which cumulatively diminished the role of the normal schools in the formation of the nation's teachers. In the town of Iguala and on its outskirts, two hours southwest of the nation's capital, the buses came under fire by local police, killing six students. 43 students were captured by the police. Passed off to a local drug cartel, they disappeared, presumed to be murdered. The abduction of these activist student-teachers placed an international spotlight on the political persecution of the normal schools. It launched mass protests for months across Mexico that drew tens of thousands, with strikes by CNTE teachers in Guerrero and students in Mexico City closing their university campuses in solidarity.

Explanations for the motivations behind the violent attack on the students vary. Many extend beyond the official version that it was the product of a corrupt local mayor and police force immeshed, like many others in Guerrero, in a cartel, who hated the students, were upset they had taken the buses, which unbeknownst to them may have been used for drug smuggling. According to the investigation of the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts commissioned by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States, local human rights groups and *Proceso* magazine, local military authorities,

¹³⁷ This account is based on the conclusions of the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts (2016) *Ayotzinapa Report* downloaded at: <http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/activities/giei.asp>.

situated at a base less than a kilometre from the attack which also provides communications for state, federal and municipal police, were aware of the movements of students that night and attacks upon them. Radio communications during key periods in the attacks were withheld by the military from the Interdisciplinary Group's investigators (Turati 2014). The likely complicity of upper levels of government in the disappearance of these students presents a chilling picture of potential state involvement in the murderous suppression of politically inconvenient student-teachers.

The rural college has produced 88 generations of teachers since its founding in 1936, during the government of leftist president Lazaro Cardenas. Since the beginning, its students, most from local peasant families, have led struggles for land reform while studying agricultural methods to in turn train the area's children in primary and secondary schools. In marked contrast with the national education system's official priorities of English, Spanish and mathematics, the *normalistas* of Ayotzinapa also take courses in community organizing, Indigenous languages and political economy. According to alumni and primary teacher Joel Amateco Venancio¹³⁸, a leader in the campaign for justice for the disappeared and murdered students, "The goal of the school is to form teachers who are socially and politically aware and on the side of the vulnerable. Graduates of this school have a more profound understanding of the essence of what it means to be a teacher" (Bocking 2015b).

¹³⁸ I visited the Ayotzinapa normal college and met with the parents of several of the disappeared students in February 2015. A memorial of 43 empty chairs and portraits of each of the disappeared and murdered students occupied most of the central square for the school of 500 students. I slept that night in one of the classrooms along with several university students from Mexico City. The community police, autonomous from the government and armed with hunting rifles, guarded the gates of the college.

The Mexican government staggered the full roll out of programs associated with the Ley de Servicio Profesional Docente, beginning with measures that primarily affected new teachers. The SEP initiated the system of exams in July 2014 for new teaching jobs in the coming school year, with 149 000 applicants competing for 16 505 positions, according to the government. The exam consisted of two segments, with 80 multiple choice questions on teaching practice in the first, and 95 multiple choice questions to assess general intelligence and ethics on the second, with 20 questions on each segment not marked. 344 application centres were established throughout the country, most of which proceeded without incident. It was strongly opposed by the CNTE, which blockaded the exam sites in Michoacan, Guerrero, Chiapas and Oaxaca, resulting in their postponement and relocation to nearby states (Poy Solano 2014; Poy Solano et al 2014). Perhaps because this component of the Ley de Servicio Profesional Docente did not affect the employment of existing teachers, it did not provoke mass protests across the country, resulting in its more or less successful implementation.

The CNTE argued that the written exam was both a poor method of assessing whether an applicant would be a competent teacher, and that it undermined the credibility of public faculties of education, particularly the normales, which were dedicated to training teachers, and thereby the overall professional autonomy of teachers. It also represented a further shift from conditions prior to 1992 when successful graduation guaranteed a teaching position (Enrique Enriquez Ibarra, CNTE Section 9 General Secretary, Interviewed Jun. 2015). Their opposition was also rooted in a historic understanding of teachers in Mexico, existing since the founding of the SEP shortly after the Revolution in 1921, that teaching held a distinct status from the ‘liberal professions’ of law or medicine. Whereas duly certified doctors or lawyers were autonomous in

the sense that they could set up a private practice or become employees of an institution, teachers were civil servants more akin to military officers, in the terms of their professional commitment as civil servants (Hugo Aboites, Interviewed Feb. 2015). This section focuses on a significant change to teaching as a profession introduced by the Ley de Servicio Profesional Docente. Coinciding with the implementation of application exams, graduation from normales or faculties of education would no longer be a mandatory prerequisite for becoming a teacher. The federal government claimed that the principal rationale for the measure was to alleviate a teacher shortage, by making it much easier for professionals in other fields to apply (AFSEDF Official 1, Interviewed Feb. 2015). Prospective teachers would require a bachelor's degree (licenciatura) in their subject area (or equivalent years of trade employment for workshop teachers). Their grasp of pedagogy, professional ethics and capacities for working with children and adolescents would be assessed through the multiple choice exam. In effect, it reiterated the ACE's claim that there are limited professional skills intrinsic to the teaching profession, beyond subject-area knowledge. As a result, this aspect of the Ley had both a profound impact on the collective identity of the Mexican teaching profession, and threatened to considerably undermine its professional capacities.

It is the contention of education researcher César Navarro, that the Ley de Servicio Profesional Docente's undermining of the normales is about fundamentally transforming the professional culture of teachers, "[T]eachers' identity has been formed to a great extent from the 'cradle' of the normales and for that reason, a central project of the reform culminates with its extinction and the sweeping out of the public school, teachers who graduated from these education institutions." (Navarro 2016) [Author's translation]. Mexico has 484 rural and urban

normal schools, of which 274 are public institutions, accounting for 77 percent of Mexico's 121 000 student-teachers. However public normales were at 73 percent enrolment and private normales 52 percent in 2013-14, the first year in which a degree in education became optional (Poy Solano 2016b). Funding from the SEP for these institutions has been in longterm decline, dropping precipitously in recent years.¹³⁹ The former president of the Escuela Nacional de Maestros described the state of normal schools as "paralysis, financial asphyxiation and academic abandonment" (Poy Solano 2016b) [Author's translation]. According to Poy Solano, one factor has been the increasing withdrawal of support from the official SNTE, which provides some resources through funding it holds in trust from the SEP.

The General Secretary of CNTE Section 9 of Mexico City's primary teachers, Enrique Enriquez Ibarra, explains why training in subject knowledge alone is insufficient to being an effective teacher:

When these colleagues come in to give a class, they don't have all the elements necessary for classroom management, teaching strategies and pedagogy. It's different to do it in a study, or a lecture hall, then to have 20, 25, 40 kids in a group. We see this a lot in the secondary [schools]. ... We have doctors, accountants, chemists, mathematicians from the universities, that we're not saying they're not good, right? But when they enter the secondary, and they're in front of adolescents that are changing, they don't have control of the group... Because these teachers don't have the profile of a graduate of the normales. And this is will become more prevalent in the primaries and preschools. (Interviewed Feb. 2015) [Author's translation].

A secondary teacher adds that the Ley in fact exacerbated a longterm issue within secondaries, as the SEP lacked pedagogical programs for less common subjects like art or music, the system has tended to hire professionals in areas outside of core academic subjects rather than normal graduates (Mexico City Teacher 9: Interviewed Jun. 2015). According to a senior official of

¹³⁹ A symptom of underfunding is that only 29 percent of instructors in normales are full time, a majority work on a variable, hourly basis (Poy Solano 2016b).

Mexico City's basic education system, AFSEDF acknowledges that graduates from normales are better trained in classroom practice than graduates from private and public non-education universities and those without education degrees. It has a first hiring round just open to graduates of the normales, then opens a second round for remaining positions to all other applicants (AFSEDF Official 1: Interviewed Feb. 2015).

The contention of the SEP and Enrique Peña Nieto that a degree in education is not necessary for effective teachers is tantamount to arguing that there is only a limited base of abilities and skills, apart from subject area knowledge which is intrinsic to teaching (Hugo Aboites, Interviewed Feb. 2015). According to these proponents, it is something that can be picked up on the job, or as the leaders of Teach for America (TFA) claim, through a three week crash course. This is a profound devaluation of the concept of teachers' professionalism. While TFA has received considerable public pushback in the US as discussed in Chapter 5, this form of deskilling of teachers has not yet sparked popular concern in Mexico. Nevertheless, it is already transforming the profession in a far more profound way, with implications for the nature of being a teacher, and the education that students receive.

6.7: Testing Teachers: Ley de Servicio Profesional Docente (Professional Teaching Service Law)

The resistance provoked by the implementation of standardized exams for existing teachers through the fall of 2015, though similarly geographically concentrated as the protests against the entry exam, proved to be more disruptive, and the resentment it represented, far more

widespread. What was the source of this strong opposition? According to a report issued in May 2016 by the Mexican Senate's policy think tank as protests began anew:

The teacher evaluation system instituted by the reform of 2013 is one of the *highest impact* [italics in original] in the world because it determines each step in the employment trajectory of teachers that work in basic education, approximately 1.3 million in the publicly operated system. It is unique in its objective of evaluating in a manner completely external, without the participation of school authorities, each teacher in the immense Mexican education system (Senate of Mexico 2016: 3). [Author's translation]

This passage clearly presents the ambition of Peña Nieto's government through the Ley de Servicio Profesional Docente and its dependence on the federal government. The legislation ultimately determined the employment conditions of teachers across Mexico, negating collective bargaining over the most important aspects of the profession. In the absence of firm control over many state education systems, and much less at the school level with the questionable loyalty of school directors to the Reform, themselves subject to the exam, the national SEP and the INEE were obligated to directly administer the exam. This remarkable degree of centralization contrasts with New York State where school districts and principals were relied upon to supervise at the smallest scale equivalent forms of teacher evaluation.

The standardized exam was structured to function within a fully centralized system. Lacking participation by local school officials, direct observation of teaching as is common in US and Canadian teacher evaluations was ruled out. The SEP and INEE established a schedule reaching to 2020, whereby Mexico's 1.3 million primary and secondary teachers and school directors would participate in their first round of evaluations at the rate of 300 000 a year, divided over two periods in the spring and fall. Selected teachers reported to a local examination hall consisting of a computer lab, where over up to four hours, they completed a multiple choice

exam on teaching practice, wrote and uploaded a fully annotated lesson plan, and uploaded examples of student work, representing both high and low achievement. Teachers who passed with at least a ‘sufficient’ grade, were required to take the exam again in four years, while those deemed ‘insufficient’ must take remedial courses at their own expense, and try again next year. Failure for a third time would result in automatic dismissal for teachers hired before the implementation of the Ley in 2013. Those hired before this date would be transferred to a lower paid secretarial position (Senate of Mexico 2016: 1).

The first round in fall 2015 was “sensibly reduced” to only 106 000 participants. The second round in spring 2016 was postponed to the following school year, pushing back the initial schedule (Senate of Mexico 2016: 1). According to education researcher Hugo Aboites, at this rate it would take over 12 years to evaluate every teacher through the three steps, significantly weakening the practical effect of the Ley De Servicio Profesional Docente.¹⁴⁰ These administrative setbacks were caused by a combination of numerous technical glitches in the national computer-based exam system¹⁴¹ and large scale resistance by teachers in states where the CNTE predominated. In these states, tactics varied from mass blockades of exam sites preventing their operation, to alleged widespread cases of sabotage of computer equipment within the halls by the test takers, on a sufficient scale to fully disrupt exams, as all attendees claimed that the technology was dysfunctional and would leave (Cano 2015; Briseño 2015). According to the Senate Report, 90 percent of teachers and directors called for evaluation in the first round participated. Of the 16 000 who did not, 75 percent were located in Chiapas,

¹⁴⁰ Remarks at the opening plenary of a conference of researchers and teachers critical of Mexico’s education reforms, attended by the author. Autonomous University of the City of Mexico (UACM), January 29, 2016.

¹⁴¹ Leading the Senate report to suggest that this was the cause of many teachers only being able to complete one section of the exam.

Guerrero, Michoacán and Oaxaca, and will be assigned a new exam date in the following year.

The 3 360 teachers located elsewhere were fired (Senate of Mexico 2016: 17).

Of the 103 313 teacher participants¹⁴², 15 percent were considered ‘insufficient’, 38 percent ‘sufficient’, 40 percent ‘good’, and 8 percent ‘outstanding’.¹⁴³ If the teachers are subtracted who failed due to submitting only one piece of the three components, rather than low marks, the ‘insufficient’ rate is cut in half. (Senate of Mexico 2016: 14). With its breakdown into four possible ratings, this evaluation system bears some similarities with New York State’s contemporary APPR (see Chapter 5.7). While the Mexican criteria is based on an exam taken by teachers (since the demise of the ENLACE), rather than the results of those taken by their students as in New York, in both cases politicians claimed that the exams would act as a sorting mechanism that would pinpoint the system’s bad teachers.¹⁴⁴ While New York State’s Cuomo claimed that less than one percent of teachers being found unsatisfactory was ‘baloney’, and vowed to create a new exam, the SEP accepted the results with good graces, stating that they revealed “only the best prepared are giving classes” (Senate of Mexico 2016: 14). However the Senate’s report on the Ley acknowledges the challenge of prominent academics who argued that the results undermined the fundamental claims behind Peña Nieto’s education reforms, that the shortcomings of the nation’s school system were primarily due to bad teachers. They also questioned the validity of a multiple choice exam to evaluate teachers’ capacities in the first place. The report strikes a critical note in observing that while the INEE recognized the existence

¹⁴² The balance were school directors.

¹⁴³ Entitling them to a 35 percent raise.

¹⁴⁴ The similarities continue in the number of chances teachers have to improve on unsatisfactory grades in subsequent exams and the ultimate consequence of dismissal. However all New York teachers would be required to participate in the evaluation every year, unlike successful teachers in Mexico.

of various technical glitches, and said it would ‘perfect’ its instruments, not only did the SEP not question the results of the initial evaluation... it declared them “satisfactory and sound”, claiming that they “reflect the teaching competencies and the knowledge of those who were evaluated.”” (Senate of Mexico 2016: 17)

The CNTE has pledged to resist the Ley until its abrogation. Barring the success of massive government repression in the movement’s regional base, attempted since at least the fall of 2015 in Oaxaca, where the union’s bank account has been frozen, marches have been subject to police violence and leaders including the general secretary have been imprisoned, the standardized teacher evaluation exams will continue to be hampered. Though carried out in the absence of resistance in most of Mexico, a sizeable number of teachers across the nation will continue to hold the exams in contempt. Nearly all Mexico City teachers I interviewed prior to the implementation of this exam, treated it with suspicion. Returning to my two case study schools in the delegation of Iztapalapa in February 2016, where several teachers from each had been selected, their earlier views were confirmed. One teacher who had taken the exam, explained that she had done so because there was no other alternative, but did not believe that it was an effective evaluation of her teaching. Given its nationwide application, the questions were designed to assess as many realities as possible within the diverse country. However she argued, this meant that many were not relevant to the context in which she taught. “In twenty years in Mexico City, I have never taught a student for whom Spanish was a second language. How would I know those teaching strategies?” Or the questions were inane. “A spider enters the classroom. Do you: A) Kill it. B) Ask a student to kill it. C) Capture it. If I answer A, does that mean I’m against scientific inquiry or am I maintaining safety?” Only a school union

representative affiliated with the official SNTE Section 10 leadership seemed to think that this form of testing was the way of the future.

Opposition to the Ley from both the CNTE and many non-affiliated teachers can be grouped into at least three principal reasons. First is the objection that standardized tests cannot effectively evaluate the capacities of a teacher, substantiated by both self-identified ‘critical’ education researchers like Aboites, and even by the president of the INEE Sylvia Schmelkes. In an extraordinary interview in July 2016 with the Mexico City newspaper *La Jornada* in the midst of ongoing protests by the CNTE, she stated that the Ley in its current form, “may not be what the country and teachers need,” recognizing that it is strongly opposed by many teachers, and musing that changes could be made. She admits that the Ley in its current form was an inferior version of what would have been a more meaningful measure of teacher competencies:

[B]ut when we calculated numbers and over all the logistics required to train evaluators that would be capable of evaluating teachers in the classroom, and not once but various times, and not one trainer, but at least two. When we confirmed this, we saw that it wasn’t possible, for this reason we designed qualitative instruments. (Poy Solano 2016a)
[Author’s translation]

While the Senate report purports to primarily serve as an objective analysis of the Ley de Servicio Profesional Docente without drawing its own substantive conclusions, its sympathy with this view is suggested, not least by its prominent citations of education policy critic Diane Ravitch in describing similar teacher evaluation programs in the US (part of a brief section of international comparisons). As will be discussed below, that Peña Nieto’s education reforms draws broad criticism from within the senate, and even from the head of the agency that designed its testing instruments, is precipitous for dissident teachers.

A second objection voiced especially from the CNTE, is that the purportedly ‘objective’ system is not so. Given that the SEP and leaders like Peña Nieto apparently concur with Mexicano Primero that the primary cause of the deficiencies of the education system are ‘bad teachers’, and that they can be identified with a multiple choice test on professional knowledge, there is a widespread belief among CNTE activists that the exam can and will be structured to yield a desired pass/fail rate (Mexico City Teacher 9, Interviewed Jun. 2015; CNTE Section 10 Activist, Interviewed Feb. 2015). Based on this fundamental mistrust of the intentions of the SEP, the INEE and the politicians which govern them, CNTE activists fear the exam would be used to purge experienced teachers and activists. They point to similar reasons for opposing an additional rule of the Ley de Servicio Profesional Docente, which sets out a series of reasons for which teachers will be automatically fired. A particularly contentious one consists of having three consecutive unexcused absences. In a national context where legal strikes are virtually unknown¹⁴⁵, activists fear that the law will quash militancy by creating a strong penalty for participation in work stoppages of more than a brief duration. As will be discussed in the final section of this chapter, this rule did not prevent the eruption of open ended strikes in the CNTE’s core states in the spring of 2016, despite thousands of firings. Whether this limited its spread is difficult to ascertain, although a senior official of the AFESDF believed that it certainly had limited strikes as of 2015 in Mexico City, due to its judicious application here (AFESDF Official

¹⁴⁵ The number of legally recognized strikes in the federally regulated sector (employees of state enterprises, most manufacturing, banking, resource extraction, inter-state transportation) was an annual average of 138 between 1989 and 1994, dropping over the succeeding 15 years to reach an average of 18 a year between 2007 and 2012. To obtain legal recognition of a strike, workers must make a formal request before a conciliation and arbitration board comprised of representatives of the state, employer associations and unions. The latter is nearly always represented by a PRI-affiliated pro-employer union. Requests for a strike are routinely rejected for myriad reasons (Bensusan & Middlebrook 2013: 59-60). Considering this, and the CNTE’s limited formal recognition at the state level, the movement’s strikes are virtually always illegal.

1: Interviewed Feb. 2015). Suggesting awareness that the rule could have an effect on participation, the general secretary of Section 7 in Chiapas stated at the outset of a strike in May 2016, “the first thing that we have to do is break the fear, because if we are thinking of the three days, well then we’re screwed, truly, I’ve said various times that there’s no alternatives...” (Alerta Chiapas 2016) [Author’s translation].

Thirdly, CNTE members and critical academics explain that the terms within the Ley which determine teacher employment were not implemented through negotiation with the CNTE (nor for that matter, with the official SNTE leadership). They were unilaterally imposed. Extending from this, the clauses of the Ley which stipulate when teachers may be fired (for not taking the exam, failing the exam, unexcused absences, among other reasons), may not be appealed. With the elimination of these rights to due process, public school teachers are exempted from federal labour law which covers all other workers. The capacity of the union to intervene in defence of its members is also significantly limited. Continuing in this general spirit of intransigence, the federal government subsequently refused to modify any aspect of these central aspects of the Ley (Hugo Aboites, Interviewed Feb. 2015; CNTE Section 10 Activist, Interviewed Feb. 2015).

I think it’s an attempt to subordinate teachers who have been revolting for many years, decades, and who have become a very strong opponent to public neoliberal policies. ... We’re talking about a half million teachers who were active in 26 states in 32 that form this nation. So it’s an attempt to control a political force. And then, on another level it’s a way of getting rid of some nuclei of resistance that are more important, like in Oaxaca, Guerrero, Chiapas, Michoacan, especially. And then, on another level it’s a way of fighting that teacher who’s a troublemaker or this one who’s a leader, or this one who’s a very responsible teacher, but that order, that we’re going to get rid of ‘irresponsible’ teachers that’s the main thrust of the reforms. No, it’s the other way around. First it’s the demolition of a political force. (Hugo Aboites: Interviewed Feb. 2015)

For Aboites and CNTE activists, the Ley has profound implications for the capacity of teachers to engage in contentious politics. The following section will explore how these measures interact with and increase the precarious employment conditions of secondary teachers in Mexico City, with considerable impact on their professional autonomy.

6.8: Precarious Employment & Professional Autonomy

This section explores how workplace relations and power dynamics between teachers and school directors in Mexico City have been affected by the waves of neoliberal reforms described above in this chapter. As will be explained, school directors are not nearly as integral to the front-line implementation of neoliberal reforms affecting teachers' professional autonomy, as are their colleagues in New York City. This is reflected in the extreme top-down nature of the education reforms embodied in the Ley as discussed in the previous section. The structure of non-director participation is perhaps one of largest factors undermining the success of neoliberal reforms, as this limits the ability to influence school-level dynamics among staff. As a result, teacher-director relations vary depending more on individual rather than structural factors. In many of Mexico City's secondary schools, the real source of weakness in autonomous teacher culture in the face of top-down edicts, is the virtual absence according to many teachers, of the official SNTE to represent their interests in workplace-level disputes. The second half of this section will explain how one of the fundamental sources of teacher precariousness predates the Ley, but has worsened in recent years. Mexican teachers are overwhelmingly employed on a part time basis and required to apply for more hours. The nature of this employment is perhaps so taken for granted, that it is hardly ever mentioned in analyses published by Mexican teachers activists or

their allies, yet it is a foundational cause for the insecurity of teachers' work lives, with a strong impact on their professional autonomy.

It is highly significant that school directors in Mexico remain part of the teachers' union. They do not have the power to hire or fire teachers. Most disciplinary authority is held by zone supervisors and inspectors. Whereas in Canada and the US, school administrator membership in teachers' federations was mostly a holdover from when these organizations acted as professional associations rather than labour unions¹⁴⁶, in Mexico it is largely a product of the union's corporatist origins. The SNTE was formed to aggregate all education workers into one organization for the purposes of state-driven political mobilization. It was also an integral part of the union's clientelistic structure. With promotion in many states controlled by the union and used to reward loyalty, a 1992 reform stipulating that directors be appointed by the SEP on the basis of a written exam was observed in the breach (Hugo Aboites, Interviewed Feb. 2015). However in school delegations (districts) where teachers were able to democratize the structures of the SEP and the SNTE, usually in states where the CNTE was consolidated, new practices emerged whereby school directors were elected by their peers (Cook 1996: 194-195). As a result, school directors in these areas are frequently movement leaders. An example is Enrique Enriquez Ibarra, General Secretary of Mexico City's CNTE Section 9, who directs a primary school on the morning shift. Changing the role of school directors to become front-line managers capable of implementing top-down administrative policies is a key priority for neoliberal reform advocates. The Ley de Servicio Profesional Docente established a centralized written exam for aspirants to school leadership, wresting control of appointments from both the corrupt official SNTE,

¹⁴⁶ They remain members in some provincial teachers' federations in Canada. The evolution of administrator's involvement in federations in Ontario will be discussed in Chapter 7.

weakened since the departure of Gordillo, and the democratic practices of its dissidents. After the implementation of standardized teacher exams, the highest demand of Mexicanos Primero has been the removal of school directors from membership in the SNTE (Bocking 2015: 92). Peña Nieto has not yet signalled an intent to pursue this exclusion. The OECD's '*Getting it Right: Strategic Agenda for Reforms in Mexico*' (2013) published at the start of Peña Nieto's term, recommended giving school directors the power to hire and fire teachers, to increase 'school autonomy'. This term borrows from the 'School Based Management' discourse previously used to advocate for the Quality Schools Program (PEC) and defend parent fundraising (OECD 2013a: 129-130).

The capacities of school directors to intervene in teachers' classroom practice has increased over the past few years. However a senior AFESDF official describes how much still depends on their individual characteristics and those of the teachers at their school:

Technical secondary schools have a very hierarchical structure. ... They're militarized. ... In the case of the general secondaries, it depends on each one, there's some with a very successful leadership and others where it's a disaster. In the primaries, much depends on the director... But I'll say that the reform indicates that leadership needs to be participatory and inclusive. ... I've observed that there's some where they've really achieved a level of co-action, and they are very respected, they've earned their place in the hierarchy as a director. They're others that haven't, and they're questioned [by their teachers]. And others that utilize the power relationship. (AFESDF Official 1, Interviewed Feb. 2015) [Author's translation]

This official describes a policy intended to increase the ability of school directors to observe classroom teaching, while creating a more formal school-level leadership team:

As a part of the strategy to implement the reform in the DF, we're striving to strengthen the director with a new structure. Because normally in primaries, it's easier to see it, to know the teachers and the director, in front of the classroom. Now with schools that have ten or more groups per grade, which in the DF are 75 percent... of an administrative sub director to download administrative work from the director, an academic sub director, a

promoter of reading and a promoter of new technologies. (AFESDF Official 1, Interviewed Feb. 2015) [Author's translation]

At face value, such a structure could well offer benefits for improving the professional practices of teachers. This is assuming that resources, such as time from the classroom to pursue professional development, which historically has been scarce, are actually available for teachers, and provided that while showing ways for teachers to improve, that their capacities for professional judgement are also respected. While not an interview question, one participant complained that the 'promoters' were dictating how they should teach, and added that school directors now have the ability to reject or approve teachers transfers to their school (Mexico City Teacher 6, Interviewed Feb. 2015).

A secondary teacher active in the CNTE considered that school directors still don't generally intervene in teachers' work, but if there's a conflict, then there is wider scope for them or inspectors to observe their classroom teaching. According to him such interventions were typically of a disciplinary rather than a collegial nature. Much depends on the power dynamics in a given school, "Lately the idea has been increasing that the director is the law. That's to say, he will determine everything, when a few years ago, we could still, especially in the meetings of the technical committee [monthly staff meetings], debate what we should do in the school." (CNTE Section 10 Activist, Interviewed Feb. 2015) [Author's translation]. He believed that the SEP was pushing this culture shift, and that eventually they want to give directors the power to hire and fire.¹⁴⁷ It is interesting in this context that Mexico City teachers are both older on average than

¹⁴⁷ He also suggests how though since the Ley, directors are now appointed through a combination of exams and minimum years of service, clientelism can still work, but more in the hands of SEP administrators rather than the SNTE, by sponsors guiding prospective directors through exam preparation (CNTE Section 10 Activist: Interviewed Feb. 2015).

NYC teachers (42 years compared to 40), but also substantially more experienced, with an average of 17 years of service¹⁴⁸, compared to less than 11 in NYC¹⁴⁹ (INEE 2015: 35). A much lower rate of turnover in Mexico City's schools may be significant in shaping workplace cultures where teachers are more likely to be confident enough to assert their own ideas on both classroom teaching and how the school should be run.

Several teachers I interviewed, especially those serving as a sub director, director, or as a tutor for new teachers, emphasized a distinction between their criticism of contemporary policies which they saw primarily impacting teachers' employment conditions, and a belief that many teachers lacked innovation in their pedagogical practices, and needed an external push to change. A sub director voiced his belief that:

Many teachers defend their method, their form of work and they don't want to leave their comfort zone, but some dynamic teachers are versatile, adapting to the necessities and socioeconomic conditions of the country and they are the ones promoting these changes. So we have a contradiction between those that do it and those that don't and the government says, 'Some teachers in these contexts in primary and secondary [schools] are having success, why not you?' And we're in this dilemma, to make a Reform approved by law is not what we want, [so] we have to adapt ourselves to this new change, and the teachers should reflect daily on their practice, in their innovation, they should also keep themselves updated, so that education can take another direction in the country. (Mexico City Teacher 4, Interviewed Feb. 2015). [Author's translation]

A secondary science teacher with 23 years experience, contends that the ideas of classroom teachers are seldom taken into account in policy making, resulting in a disjuncture with classroom experience creating cynicism among teachers:

What I would like is that they take into consideration our perspectives as teachers in elaborating their plans, programs, strategies. ...it's as if they never call us. They say they do but it's not true, who knows who they call, but it's not people in the classroom. Those

¹⁴⁸ Data provided by the AFESDF to the author, based on the 2014-15 school year.

¹⁴⁹ Based on the 2013-14 school year. See Chapter 5.

of us in the classroom we have different challenges with the children. ... Whoever it is that elaborates the programs and whatnot, they're not in the classroom, they're people in an office, working at a desk, and they don't see the problems that there are in every school and each classroom. (Mexico City Teacher 2: Interviewed Feb. 2015) [Author's translation]

This high degree of skepticism of top-down policies, formed without their participation and felt to be divorced from their working experience, is common among Mexico City teachers, even if it is seldom expressed in the highly visible manner by their colleagues in more militant states.

The precarious employment of Mexican teachers is structurally determined in the assignment of positions (*plazas*), with a profound impact on their capacity to exercise their professional judgement. The issue exists on two levels. Firstly, the vast majority of teachers are underemployed, assigned less than full time status. Secondly, teachers receive little to no time during their regular workday for professional duties outside of classroom teaching. The time to do so must be found outside of extensive hours in the classroom for those full time, or the second jobs of underemployed teachers. In this sense, the employment structure of Mexican primary and secondary teachers is strikingly different from their colleagues in Canada or the US, where the job is structured in the overwhelming majority of circumstances as a full time occupation.

The standard teaching load for a primary teacher working in a school with morning and afternoon shifts consists of 18.4 hours of classroom time a week, amounting to daily responsibility for one grade-level class during one of these shifts. This work schedule does not recognize (or compensate) any time for non-classroom professional duties (Hernandez, Llamas & Garro 2012: 329). The work schedules of secondary teachers are more complex. While teachers in Canada and the US are usually assigned a full time course load at the start of their

employment, new secondary teachers in Mexico are typically assigned two or three daily 50 minute classes, amounting to 12 to 15 hours of work a week. They may apply to teach additional courses as they become available, to eventually reach a maximum of 42 hours a week, typically only attained in the last few years of a career. According to the INEE, teachers assigned full time hours (36-42 hours a week) have remained static at around 10 percent from 1999 to 2015. The number of those at three quarters of full time was also static at around 12 percent. However, teachers employed half time (20 hours) declined from 32 to 22 percent from 1999 to 2014, and teachers with hourly employment less than part time increased from 43 to 55 percent, with the biggest growth since 2008 (INEE 2015: 56-57). Less than full time work is increasingly the trend, as in secondary schools opened between 2010-2014, 70 percent of teachers are on an hourly basis, whereas only half are in schools created between 1999-2004 (INEE 2015: 56-57). As a result, most secondary teachers approaching full time hours work in two or even three schools, frequently commuting from one to the other in the afternoon. In this way, the employment conditions of secondary teachers in Mexico bears a resemblance to itinerant adjunct university lecturers in the US or Canada.

Historically, the objective held by most teachers of increasing their hours towards full time status, obtaining assignments at schools closer to home, or consolidating their hours into one school, has created rich opportunities for patronage and clientelism for both SNTE and SEP officials (Hecock 2014; Hernandez Navarro 2012: 432; Martin 1994: 94-99; Mexico City Teacher 7: Interviewed May 2015). While the application exams of the Ley de Servicio Profesional Docente is supposed to remove this opportunity for graft, informants suggested that opportunities were still abundant for authorities to confer favours in employment assignments.

Meanwhile on another dimension of employment security, the proportion of secondary teachers with permanent status, formally gained after successfully completing six months in a permanent position, has declined from 94 percent in 2002 to 76 percent in 2015 (Hernandez, Llamas & Garro 2012: 330; INEE 2015: 61). This statistic may suggest a growing number of teachers working in back to back interm positions, covering teachers on longterm absences, suggesting that the SEP is increasingly assigning work through these interm positions rather than new permanent positions (plazas).

Two problems exist with the assignment of work in units of several hours for secondary teachers. On one end, teachers lack enough working hours and therefore have to do other work to support themselves, often outside of teaching. A sub director observes of his colleagues:

Here the average is 21 hours [a week], but there are those that only have 9, 12, 15. There are some that have more hours because they work at more schools... but you can't live with 21 hours of work in this country, you need to do your 42 hours to live marginally decently. (Mexico City Teacher 4: Interviewed Feb. 2015) [Author's translation].

A secondary teacher of civics for eight years with a degree in psychology was assigned 20 hours spread over afternoons, with no work on Wednesdays. In the mornings she practiced psychology from her home (Mexico City Teacher 7: Interviewed May 2015). A secondary visual arts teacher in his first year got by with 12 hours a week, teaching six groups for two hours each (Mexico City Teacher 9: Interviewed Jun 2015). At the other end, senior teachers who have obtained a 'double shift' in primary schools, teaching in both the morning and afternoon, and secondary teachers who have accumulated 36 to 42 hours, have an adequate salary, but no time to prepare for their classes. A secondary teacher of civics and 'orientation' (counselling) for 19 years who has gained full time status, works for 22 hours a week from 9 am to 1:30 pm at one school, and

for an additional 20 hours from 4:30 pm to 8:10 pm at another school (Mexico City Teacher 1: Interviewed Feb. 2015). His colleague a science teacher for 23 years, works for 19 hours from 7:30 am to 11 am in one school, and then teaches for another 19 hours from 2 pm to 7:20 pm (Mexico City Teacher 2: Interviewed Feb. 2015).

The OECD statistics below in Table 1 demonstrate that Mexican secondary teachers spend a far higher proportion of their recognized working time actively engaged in classroom teaching than their colleagues elsewhere in North America. By ‘recognized’ working time, I refer to the period of time that teachers are contractually or statutorily mandated to perform teaching related duties. For example education legislation in Ontario stipulates that teachers must be present 15 minutes before the start of classes and for 10 minutes past the end of the school day, though in certain circumstances teachers can also be asked to perform duties up until 5 pm. Professional preparation periods where teachers are not responsible for students are included within this recognized work day in both Ontario and New York State. Not so for Mexican teachers. Unofficially ‘recognized’ work of teachers occurs on their evenings and weekends, usually outside the school.

Table 1: Secondary classroom teaching as proportion of recognized work				
	Mexico	United States	Canada	OECD Average
Percentage of recognized work time in classroom	90%	71%	60%	—
Total yearly hours of classroom teaching	1047	981	743	694

(OECD 2015: 455)

This OECD report explains the significance of these statistics:

The proportion of statutory working time spent teaching provides information on the amount of time available for non-teaching activities such as lesson preparation, correction, in-service training and staff meetings. A large proportion of statutory working time spent teaching may indicate that less time is devoted to tasks such as assessing students and preparing lessons. It also could indicate that teachers have to perform these tasks on their own time and to work more hours than required by statutory working time. (OECD 2015: 450)

Mexico City's school authorities at the AFESDF acknowledged that their teachers must use their own time to perform many of the tasks described above which are essential to classroom teaching (AFESDF Official 1: Interviewed Feb. 2015). According to a school director, when secondary teachers are assigned their position, the AFESDF assigned them a proportional number of weekly 'co-curricular' hours for which they are paid to do non-classroom professional activities. The ratio was close to three hours for 30 hours in the classroom, with part time teachers often receiving none (Mexico City 8: Interviewed May 2015). The sub director who earlier voiced his frustration over a perceived lack of innovation among many teachers acknowledges the difficulties of being creative with a full time teaching load:

A teacher with 42 hour in my country is not going to have time to train or update themselves because you're up at 6 am and you're working until 7 or 7:30 at night. When do you have a shower, eat or sleep? When do you see your family? Here a class of 50 minutes per group, if I have 39 hours and I teach science that means I give 6 hours a week to each group... it doesn't leave me time before or afterwards. So I have to bring my marking home, but that's on my time. But if I had 42 hours full time, I would have to mark and teach at the same time in the classroom, I wouldn't be able to take away extra work. As a result, the only moment that I have to work and meet with my colleagues is during recess or during the technical committee [staff] meetings. There we have time to share, each month directors and teachers spend a full day evaluating the situation of the school to be able to make adjustments and changes. (Mexico City Teacher 4: Interviewed Feb. 2015) [Author's translation].

It is noteworthy that neither the OECD nor the SEP or senior elected officials within the Mexican government have recommended or campaigned in recent decades to improve the quality of

teaching by giving teachers paid preparation time. A major World Bank report, *Great Teachers: How to Raise Student Learning in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Bruns & Luque 2014) found that Mexico City teachers routinely spent a significant amount of time marking or doing administrative work while in the classroom.¹⁵⁰ They argue based on correlations with test scores, that such practices which take teachers away from directly engaging with students, has an adverse impact on learning. However consistent with neoliberal ideology, they blame the quality of the teachers for these practices, with little question raised that more resources may be required on the part of the state. It is difficult for teachers to fully use their professional capacities to do the time consuming tasks of preparing and delivering pedagogy oriented to the specific needs of their students when most are compelled to commute between schools, teach long hours or work a second job in order to earn a decent living. Recognized daily preparation time is critical to enabling teachers to exercise their professional autonomy.

6.9: Acquiescence, Resistance and the Challenges of Scaling Up: the CNTE in the City and the Countryside

Having explored in this chapter the evolution of national-level neoliberal education policies, the integral role of the official SNTE under Elba Esther Gordillo in their implementation and the resistance of the CNTE, this final section will explore labour relations for Mexico City teachers since 2013. Specifically, I seek to understand why secondary teachers in Mexico's capital have responded differently to similar education policies, especially from their

¹⁵⁰ The study used the 'Stallings' method of video recording classes and analyzing the proportion of time devoted to various activities. This method has been criticized by Lois Weiner and other critical education scholars as supporting deskilling, by approximating the classic 'scientific management' time studies that broke down work processes into discrete tasks in order that they be precisely defined (Lois Weiner: Interviewed Dec. 2014).

more militant colleagues in the southeast of the country. Explanations studied here include differences in the nature of work for primary and secondary teachers, the historical position of the teacher in rural and urban contexts, the presence of political allies and the relative disciplinary capacities of education authorities. This discussion will then be applied to an overview of the CNTE's upsurge against the education reforms over the summer of 2016, and an assessment of its outcome.

The day after Gordillo's arrest for embezzlement in February 2013, without public protest, the union's national executive appointed general secretary Juan Diaz de la Torre to take her place at the annual convention (Hernandez Navarro 2013). The departure of Gordillo did not lead to a collapse of the hold of the 'institutional' forces over the national SNTE and most of its state sections, despite de la Torre's far weaker political power (Enrique de la Garza Toledo: Interviewed Feb. 2015). After being virtually invisible during the initial CNTE-led upsurge against the reforms in the fall of 2013, de la Torre increased his prominence, receiving public recognition from Peña Nieto, and began the international charm offensive described in Chapter 4. Despite the strength of the upsurge, the CNTE and other dissidents were unable to contest control of the national union to the extent achieved by the movement in 1989. A Mexico City CNTE activist emphasized that the national executive's hold is reinforced by entrenched caciques (local political bosses) at the state level, who need to be challenged there (CNTE Section 10 Activist: Interviewed Feb. 2015). Despite the emergence of strong movements in new states including Veracruz and Jalisco, these dissidents were unable to win control over the official structures of their union sections, which could only be ceded by conventions called by

the national executive (Maria de la Luz Arriaga: Interviewed Jun. 2015).¹⁵¹ Advances for the movement are considerably impeded as a result of these mutually reinforcing state and national structures of control, even with a weaker leader at the top.

De la Torres' eagerness to appease Peña Nieto at the national level filters down to affect Mexico City's secondary teachers in the absence of a strong dissident movement in Section 10. According to one secondary teacher, "With the new reform, the union disappeared. Now we don't have a union. The union exists but not for teachers, that is to say, we're not protected by the union..." (Mexico City Teacher 5: Interviewed Feb. 2015) [Author's translation]. A school official attributes labour stability in Mexico City in part to de la Torre's closer alignment with the government:

There's the national level. If we compare the DF with other entities obviously there's a great deal of stability and very good relationships... This owes to very fluid communications, to giving technical-pedagogical elements that strengthen the [local] union in a technical-pedagogical position, but also to the national context where the SNTE is since the departure of Gordillo, and the identification of corruption, in a position of greater alliance, we say, with the Secretary of Public Education. Not the Coordinadora [CNTE], but the SNTE. (AFESDF Official 1: Interviewed Feb. 2015) [Author's translation].

A secondary teacher for 23 years bitterly described the situation of a dominant institutionally aligned Section 10 leadership and a weak CNTE dissidence for rank and file members:

The truth is that the union has never truly helped us. One nearly always has to go out on their own to solve problems... It's no more than a symbol and the truth is that it's divided between the democraticos [CNTE] and the charros [institutionals]. It's always a constant struggle between them and this doesn't benefit us... (Mexico City Teacher 2: Interviewed Feb. 2015) [Author's translation].

¹⁵¹ For example, CNTE activists won an overwhelming majority of delegates to the convention of the Zacatecas state section in July 2016, but the national SNTE was still able to circumvent them and appoint their preferred executive at a secret parallel convention. The same month, the dissident slate running for the state executive of Chihuahua were simply removed from the ballot by the national SNTE (Valadez Rodríguez 2016).

The comments of this teacher are a reminder that while many in Mexico City hold opinions on the validity of the education reforms (most were opposed in the two secondary schools where I conducted interviews), relatively few align themselves politically with the CNTE or the official SNTE. Two teachers active within the CNTE of Section 10 attributed the sentiments of their colleagues to a reluctant resignation to the reforms and a disbelief in their ability to challenge them. They held little optimism in the likelihood of a mass upsurge among the city's secondary teachers in the manner of their colleagues in the southeast (CNTE Section 10 Activist: Interviewed Feb. 2015; Mexico City Teacher 9: Interviewed Jun 2015).

However, interview participants active in the movement also identified significant differences between the experiences of secondary and primary teaching to explain why the dissident movement in the latter was far stronger in Mexico City. Firstly, various respondents described the nature of secondary teaching as more individualistic. One teacher describes a lack of solidarity at her school:

As part of the same situation that we don't have the support of our directors, we can't collaborate as a team, everyone works individually. At times they form small groups, but nothing more, all the teachers in the school don't come together to support each other. Everyone has their own little group, where they just defend each other... only when there's a very grave problem, then we see the necessity of supporting these colleagues. (Mexico City Teacher 5: Interviewed Feb. 2015) [Author's translation].

A Section 10 Activist (Interviewed Feb. 2015) adds that the tendency of many school directors to not encourage professional collaboration is augmented by the secondary level's division into subject areas, whereas primary teachers teaching the same grade level more frequently share resources together. Some also argue that secondary teachers are not as collegial as primary teachers because while the former had long been a heterogenous combination of graduates from

public normal schools and university faculties of education, with the Ley of 2013, they were now joined by professionals lacking any degree in education. By contrast, a majority of primary teachers were still graduates from the public normales. As four year boarding colleges, they were long the incubators of a distinct teacher identity, and many graduated together from Mexico City's large Escuela Nacional de Maestros. Another explanation are the differing structures of employment. Whereas primary teachers arrive and leave together for the morning and afternoon shifts, with their hourly employment contracts, secondary teachers have unique schedules. A secondary teacher whose employment is geographically fragmented with nine hours of classes each in two schools is also less likely to develop a strong identification with either community (Enrique Enriquez Ibarra: Interviewed Jun 2015; CNTE Section 10 Activist: Interviewed Feb. 2015; Mexico City Teacher 9: Interviewed Jun 2015).

These teachers stress that the CNTE has a much longer and deeper history of organizing among Mexico City's primary teachers, though the CNTE Section 9 has also faced significant obstacles. CNTE-affiliated teachers first won official recognition as the section's SNTE executive in 1989 through a fair election convened by the national union in the aftermath of that year's upsurge. The executive remained in the hands of CNTE supporters through subsequent elections. However in 2007, Gordillo staged a 'charrazo' (takeover of the union). At the last minute, the electoral convention was changed to a location unknown to the vast majority of the delegates, 80 percent of whom had pledged support to the CNTE slate. Gordillo's candidates won by a landslide. Although CNTE supporters secured judicial recognition that the election was

unjust, they have been unable to compel the SNTE to respect this finding¹⁵². According to CNTE Section 9's general secretary, he and other members of the parallel executive can continue representing members (on their personal time and without remuneration) because the AFESDF is aware that they have the support of most teachers (Enrique Enriquez Ibarra: Interviewed Jun 2015; CNTE Section 10 Activist: Interviewed Feb. 2015; Hernandez Navarro 2012: 386-388, 446-448; Leyva & Rodriguez 2012: 548). One of the largest reasons given for the greater strength of primary teacher dissidents is their greater ease in building alliances with parents (Hugo Aboites: Interviewed Feb. 2015). A young secondary teacher explains its importance for building a movement:

In the primary schools it's distinct because the parents are more active. In the secondary it gets more difficult, but you have to do this work. At the end of the day, if you do a good job, they see that you're there in the classroom, they see how education is being destroyed not by the teacher, but by external conditions. So many parents see this clearly. Not all, there's also some reactionary parents, but in this sense constant work gives you legitimacy. (Mexico City Teacher 9: Interviewed Jun. 2015) [Author's translation].

Primary and secondary teachers share the same SNTE locals in all other states in Mexico, making this effort at alliance building easier outside the capital.

Strong differences in the political cultures of Mexico City and the southeast states are also important for explaining the unevenness of teacher responses to national education reforms. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a fulsome analysis of the context of teacher organizing in the southeast states where the CNTE has its base: Chiapas, Oaxaca, Guerrero and Michoacan, each of which has its own complex history and distinctive dynamics from the others.

¹⁵² After the 'charrazo', the SNTE temporarily reoccupied the Section 9 building and extensively vandalized its facilities. CNTE supporters soon forced their way back in and found most of the electrical wiring had been destroyed. Mexico City police did not intervene in either case. As of 2016, much of the large five storey building remains dark and unrepaired (Hernandez Navarro 2012: 446-448).

However, a few brief points for the sake of illustrating a comparison with conditions in Mexico City can be made. When asked to explain why their colleagues protested less than teachers in the south, Mexico City secondary teachers suggested that in addition to having fewer opportunities for coalition-building with parents than primary teachers, overall, the school and their staff play a more central role in community life in the south. A teacher blamed school directors who ushered staff out of the building once their shifts were done, and lacked interest in starting extracurricular activities that could directly link the school with its surrounding neighbourhood.¹⁵³ A custodian who worked in the school she attended as a child, and a longtime prefect (responsible for assisting with student discipline and temporarily covering absent teachers) emphasized how teachers who lived in the school's neighbourhood tended to have an easier time connecting with both the students and their parents. They estimated that 30 percent of the teachers at their school lived nearby in the culturally vibrant but economically struggling neighbourhood in Iztapalapa (Mexico City Support Staff 1 & 2: Interviewed Jun. 2015). The custodian recalled an incident where staff arrived at the school to find that parents had blockaded the entrance over the shortage of certified teachers in all subject areas. She explained that while parents can support the struggles of education workers, they cannot reciprocate without risking discipline:

If I support a parent that's blocking the door to the school, I'll be the one who's disciplined... For this reason, when the teachers demonstrate they do it away from the school, not here. They don't close the schools, they simply stop work go to demonstrate in the Zocalo, [Monument to the] Revolución, etc. but not here at the school because then we could lose our jobs. (Mexico City Support Staff 2: Interviewed Jun. 2015) [Author's translation].

¹⁵³ A teacher gave an example of how the students from her school came from a working class neighbourhood with a lively music culture that has produced famous cumbia bands. Yet the school offers neither music classes nor music clubs or activities, or even the usage of its space after hours for community groups (Mexico City Teacher 6: Interviewed Feb. 2015).

As a result, to avoid discipline, demonstrations are moved away from the school site to distant sites in the centre of the city, but doing could also make it more difficult to engage parental participation (Mexico City Teacher: Interviewed Feb. 2015).

By contrast, reports from Chiapas during the waves of teacher strikes and protests from May to July of 2016 against the Peña Nieto's education reforms provide abundant examples of highly organized parents and community allies providing visible support for teachers, which would make the discipline feared by Mexico City teachers less likely. In one instance on May 23, "Before the march arrived in the central park [of state capital Tuxtla Gutiérrez] the group 'Organized Chiapan Businesspeople' delivered to the teachers a ton and a half of supplies, among them bottles of water, biscuits, soap, canned tuna, beans and rice." (Henríquez 2016a). The following weekend, *La Jornada* reported thousands of parents and other supporters marched in 80 of the state's 122 municipalities in solidarity with the teachers' strike (Henríquez 2016b). On July 13, *La Jornada* reported:

The blockade installed by residents of this city at the access to Tuxtla Gutiérrez, to support the... CNTE in their struggle, has taken on a life of its own. It has constituted itself as a permanent popular assembly, broadening the demands of the teachers, and at 15 days it is a reflection of the popular reach that the teachers' movement now has in Chiapas. Hundreds of people, up to 3500 in recent days, remain here, day and night, mobilized. ... everything started on June 27, when faced with the threat of repression against the blockade here... hundreds of people mobilized to create a 'security corridor' around the teachers. In a few days it transformed into a centre of a community of groups and movements that defended the land, opposed the privatization of energy, demanded street paving, drinkable water and defence of the region's nature reserves. (Bellinghausen 2016) [Author's translation].

As was briefly described in the history of the emergence of the CNTE in the late 1970s and early 1980s in Chapter 4, teachers' movements in the southeast states have long built alliances with established campesino and other community movements with deep histories of organization.

They are largely without equivalents in Mexico City's context, but distinctions also exist among its boroughs. Several CNTE members described Iztapalapa as the most politically active delegation (Mexico City Teachers 7 & 9: Interviewed May & Jun. 2015; CNTE Section 10 Activist: Interviewed Feb. 2015).

It is also significant to note, that state strategies of responding to teacher and popular protest vary dramatically between Mexico City and the southeast states. Sociologist Enrique de la Garza Toledo (Interviewed Feb. 2015) suggests that the administrations of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) since 1997 in Mexico City contributed to de-radicalizing and co-opting dissident movements, whose members may have been reluctant to alienate the government with protests when possibilities for dialogue existed. This tendency declined since 2013 with the election of Miguel Mancera to head the government, who has distanced himself from the social partnership approach of his predecessors, while moving closer politically to Peña Nieto. Little parallel of 'progressive' governments and social dialogue has existed in Chiapas or Oaxaca, states where the PRI has long wielded control and a reputation for violent repression of protest.¹⁵⁴ Authorities in Chiapas succeeded in alienating parents at the outset of Peña Nieto's education reforms in 2013 by interpreting increases in 'school autonomy' to allow the government to download the cost of various school operations onto the parents themselves. By contrast, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the AFESDF has emphasized that no parent would ever be obligated to pay a fee, and with support from the Mexico City government, provides free school uniforms and other supplies, as well as some bursaries. The AFESDF also retained

¹⁵⁴ The CNTE did have a more positive relationship with a PRD governorship in Michoacan in the 2000s. However it was under the same party banner in Guerrero in 2014, that the 43 students of the Ayotzinapa Teachers' College were abducted and presumed murdered with the complicity of the authorities.

stronger administrative capacities for enforcing discipline among its staff. It is easier for regional and zone inspectors to regularly visit schools when they are within a contiguous urban area, rather than spread across hundreds of kilometres of rural territory. Arnaut (2008: 148) argues that the traditional administrative hierarchy of directors, sector chiefs, supervisors, school directors, are relatively stronger in Mexico City which has remained continuously under direct federal control, than in many states that have experimented with various forms of decentralization since 1992. A senior official of the AFESDF contrasts the ability of teachers in the southeast to engage in illegal strikes, with their firmer grip in Mexico City:

Sections 9 and 10... the relationship is very good. The leaders of these sections are of the SNTE, and up until now we haven't had [strikes] in Mexico City. How could this be, because the Federal District is the scene of all the mobilizations, all the protests, that we haven't had stoppages, nor protests, well, individual protests sure, but massive ones, no. Why? Because the law stipulates that if you are absent, you are not paid. And if you miss three consecutive days, without justification, then you lose your employment. There are entities like Oaxaca, Guerrero, etc. that haven't paid attention to this and they haven't made deductions. On the contrary, as the newspapers say, they [CNTE] have been able to negotiate lost wages for everyone who came to protest. In the case of the DF, no. It's very punctual. The teacher that's absent is reported and [the pay] is deducted. The teacher who's absent three times... we proceed with the firing if there's no justification on their part, medical or what have you. So this has also made, in addition to good communication, that we have a very stable and organic relationship with the leaders of the Section. (AFESDF Official 1: Interviewed Feb. 2015) [Author's translation].

The corporate national website of the SNTE provided no indication that another massive wave of strikes and protests by teachers across Mexico was unfolding against education reforms through May to July of 2016. A succession of press releases on successful meetings of its leadership with state officials and international dignitaries was only interrupted by a statement of concern on the killing of 11 teachers in rural Oaxaca, fired on by police during a demonstration convened by the CNTE that June. While urging authorities to exercise due diligence in its

investigation, it expressed its “profound concern” that “under the banner of education reform, some actors had entered the debate with a belligerent position that precipitates violence”, not so subtly blaming the CNTE for the death of its own members (SNTE 2016). However that the SNTE felt compelled to issue a public statement on the conflict which it otherwise strenuously ignored indicated the significance of this incident. The attack made international news, with some commentators drawing comparisons with the disappearance of the 43 Ayotzinapa student teachers. Teachers’ unions in Vancouver, Toronto, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago and Boston held solidarity rallies at Mexican Consulates. Many more including Education International, sent statements to the Mexican government denouncing the killings. The negative publicity for Peña Nieto was compounded as it coincided with a meeting of the North American heads of state, the ‘Three Amigos’, in Toronto.

Mexico’s Interior Ministry announced it would meet with the CNTE, but only to acknowledge the massacre. Section 9 of the CNTE then convoked a full strike over the last two weeks of school in July (except for a final day to deliver grades and meet with parents), with the estimated participation of 400 primary schools across Mexico City. While a minority of all elementary schools, it was a mobilization not seen for years by Mexico City teachers. Dozens of secondary schools across the Iztapalapa borough held one day strikes, careful to avoid triggering the three days absence leading to firing rule.¹⁵⁵ The work stoppages were joined by another unprecedented dynamic. MORENA, the left party which had broken away from the PRD and now comprised the largest political force in the capital, began actively mobilizing its extensive

¹⁵⁵ In one instance, brigades of parents from a particularly politically active school traveled to other schools to encourage parents to support the movement citing the system’s dismal funding and buildings, who then gave moral and physical support to the more cautious and less organized secondary teachers blocking their schools.

network of neighbourhood committees in support of the teachers, and hosted a hundred thousand strong march to the Zocalo.¹⁵⁶ Amid the road blockades, occupations and strikes in the CNTE's strongholds and sporadically elsewhere, the Interior Ministry agreed to formal negotiations on the structures of teacher evaluation, the fate of 8000 teachers who had been fired during the strikes and several imprisoned leaders. The CNTE refused to meet with the adversarial education secretary, who convened a parallel series of closed door meetings with the SNTE that produced proposals around incentive pay, but nothing related to the contentious evaluation system (Poy Solano 2016c). Meanwhile, responding to meetings with CNTE leaders, MORENA, the PRD, smaller left parties and a handful of PAN deputies in the congress and senate, voiced their interest in revising Peña Nieto's education legislation. The Business Coordinating Council (Consejo Coordinador Empresarial, CCE), Mexico's most important corporate lobby group, echoed the calls for a solution to the conflict, decrying the impact of months of road blockades by the CNTE across the country, but urged the government to avoid giving concessions to "acts of extortion" (Carlos Miranda 2016).

As the 2015-16 school year concluded, the CNTE reported to its members that tentative agreements had been reached to reverse the firings of striking teachers and free imprisoned leaders. That these negotiations occurred suggested the importance of both Mexico City teachers and the movement's intervention into national politics to tip the balance in a conflict that was previously largely regional. Despite the sentiments of demoralization and resignation to the national education policy expressed by secondary teachers in 2015, reconfirmed in meetings in

¹⁵⁶ Email correspondence with member of the Trinational Coalition in Defence of Public Education, July 19, 2016.

February 2016, the conflict is a reminder of how the political culture of Mexican teachers remains in flux. The main demand remained of revoking the Ley de Servicio Profesional Docente. It remained unclear whether the teachers' movement could successfully apply frontal resistance to either sufficiently tip the balance at the national level or establish lasting regional exemptions from Enrique Peña Nieto's Ley. The political context for education policy has become increasingly polarized. Peña Nieto is historically unpopular as is the PRI in many regions, evident in losses in the 2016 gubernatorial elections, and this has contributed to discrediting many of his signature policies. However Mexicanos Primero, some leaders from the PAN and other neoliberal voices have maintained pressure from the right wing thanks to high profile media coverage, against any 'backsliding' in granting concessions to the teachers. Constant direct actions by teachers including blockades of highways, malls and airports have aggravated business groups. It is also not difficult to imagine that weeks of school closures in some regions, would have alienated some parents despite efforts of striking teachers to engage with them.

Over the early 21st Century, teachers with various degrees of collective organization have proven their capacity to render widely contentious policies inoperable, as with the Alliance for Quality Education of Elba Esther Gordillo and Felipe Calderon, or the national ENLACE exam which determined teacher pay. It is yet to be seen if the three step teacher evaluations of the Ley de Servicio Profesional Docente will be successfully implemented over the long term. Visible at the peaks of national mobilization in the early fall of 2013 and early summer of 2016, the CNTE has expanded and reinforced its networks in the north and centre of the country, beyond its bases, in the context of an official SNTE with a diminishing impact on the work lives of its members.

Yet the control of Juan Diaz de la Torre and his supporters over the union's institutional apparatus has not weakened. The movement does not appear to have significantly grown among Mexico City's secondary teachers, whether due to the greater governance powers of the education system, or because of its division from the better organized primary teachers. The dissident teachers of the CNTE lack powerful allies beyond the regional level in states like Chiapas and Oaxaca, though an alliance with the leftist MORENA party could change this especially by creating a much needed base of support in Mexico City. Struggles over neoliberal education policy in Mexico will likely continue to focus on the nature of teachers' work, increasing its precarity and de-professionalization. Such attacks undermine the core of professional autonomy. Without employment security and pedagogical training, professionalism is eroded and autonomy is impossible. Scalar strategies, though geographically uneven, will no doubt remain central to the struggles of both rural and urban teachers.

Chapter 7: Toronto

7.1: Introduction

Developments in education policy in Ontario over the early 21st Century have broadly followed the dominant trends of other Canadian provinces. Despite the absence of an intervening federal government as in the US, let alone a centralizing national government as in Mexico, there has been policy mobility between provincial education ministries and academics (Wallner 2014). Perhaps due to the absence of a neoliberalizing strong central government, distinctive waves of neoliberal policies have not passed through the provinces with the same rapidity as they have transformed US education (see Chapter 4). Though all provinces have their own standardized student exams from which data is gleaned to judge the overall effectiveness, they differ in their consequences for students. None are paired with disciplinary mechanisms comparable to the original No Child Left Behind Act of the US which would close and ‘reconstitute’ schools with low results year over year. As Wallner (2014) explains, “...no policy encounters a clean slate in the receiving jurisdiction. Rather, the legacies and the regimes at work within each province mediate the introduction of new ideas and influence the likelihood that they will be adopted.” (Wallner 2014: 221).

Understanding the legacy of the Conservative government of Premier Michael Harris (1995 to 2003) for education politics in Ontario is essential for contextualizing the succeeding Liberal governments led by Dalton McGuinty and Kathleen Wynne (since 2013). The period studied in this chapter are defined by the latter regimes as the earlier period was covered in Chapter 4. Each section below will begin with a brief overview of his legacy in this area. There is a paucity of published academic research analyzing the post-Harris era of education policy and

governance in Ontario (Pinto 2015). Publications released several years into the McGuinty era still reflect back and focus on analyzing changes in the Harris period, likely due to the dramatic nature of the changes in the latter's so-called 'Common Sense Revolution', but making analysis more difficult of the changes and continuities since then. Michael Fullan and Alan Boyle's book *Big City School Reform* (2014) is most valuable for its comprehensive explanation of McGuinty era policies (as it is for discussing New York under Mayor Bloomberg). It takes an inside (and overwhelmingly favourable) perspective as Fullan was an appointed Special Advisor on education to the provincial government during this period, remaining one of four advisors under Wynne (Fullan 2016: 219). Pinto (2015) is also very useful in assessing the same period and many of the same policies from a critical perspective. However following the central premise of this dissertation's focus, this chapter relies heavily on the perspectives of secondary teachers in Toronto, reflecting on how the policies rolled out under the McGuinty and Wynne governments have affected their professional autonomy as educators.

The chapter demonstrates how the education policies of the Liberal governments of Ontario drew upon a profound centralization of power under the previous Conservative government and its implementation of standardized testing as key metrics for defining education 'success' to shape many of their own policies. It begins as did previous case studies, by demonstrating the importance of scalar centralization, in this instance from the Toronto District School Board to the Ontario Ministry of Education, for establishing the context for contemporary neoliberal education reform in section 7.2. Next, I analyze the rapid roll out of provincial policy under the Liberals as it was understood from the centre (drawing heavily on Fullan's account) in section 7.3. The perspective then shifts in section 7.4 to look at its impact from the perspective of

teachers in an ‘inner city’ secondary school, where the imperative of raising graduation rates is felt through the increasingly managerial role of principals and vice principals as they encroach on the ability of teachers to exercise their own professional judgement in the classroom. Section 7.5 demonstrates how teachers’ professional autonomy faces different challenges in a secondary school serving an affluent area. In this context, parental intervention with administrators over the children’s grades is prevalent. For schools in working class and affluent areas, a common stress, affecting each differently, is the existence of ‘school choice’ policies, which it is argued, are contributing to a racial and class sorting of secondary students in Toronto. Finally, in section 7.6 I consider the impact of the scaling up of teachers’ collective bargaining for professional autonomy and the strategies of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation.

7.2: Centralizing Governance: Increasing Ontario Ministry of Education Control of the TDSB

The centralization of funding from school districts to provincial governments and the parallel centralization of governance and policy, began in the late 1990s and became the dominant trend across Canada by the early 2000s, reversing decentralization in the 1960s through the 1980s (Wallner 2014: 76-77). Chief among political motivations was a perceived greater capacity of provincial governments to control the large proportion of education expenditures determined by teachers’ collective bargaining. Another key impetus was the harmonization of funding levels which varied widely depending on the taxing capacities of local districts. I begin here with an overview of how the Conservative government shifted power from local school districts to the provincial government, while reducing funding particularly for

Toronto and the province's other large urban districts. This section will then demonstrate how this structure of governance has largely remained intact under the Liberals, establishing the context in which under McGuinty and Wynne, the provincial government has a significant influence on teachers' work and professional autonomy.

Centralization of Governance under the Conservatives (1995-2003)

In Ontario, the Conservatives pointed to other provinces while arguing in 1997 for the uploading of education finance from locally levied property taxes to centralized funding from the provincial government under Bill 160 (Wallner 2014: 219). This resulted in the ratcheting down of funding to a lower common denominator that squeezed Toronto which had previously financed its schools at an above average rate. Overall education funding was cut by \$5.4 billion in 1997. Some smaller rural boards which previously drew from a limited property tax base did receive funding increases (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 62).¹⁵⁷ Among its many impacts on education, another means by which Bill 160 pushed centralization was through the forced amalgamation of 129 school districts into 72 (including all public, Catholic, French & French Catholic systems). The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) was formed from the school boards, each of which was larger than many rural boards, of the six former cities of metropolitan Toronto, which at this time were also forcibly merged into Toronto (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 60). While New York City lost its elected school board trustees with the implementation of Mayoral Control, they remained in Ontario, but with an annual stipend capped by provincial legislation at \$5 000. Trustees that were not independently wealthy or retired were hampered from representing their constituents on

¹⁵⁷ Most rural Ontario electoral ridings outside the far north and the southwest consistently voted Conservative.

a full time basis, as was formerly the case in Toronto (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 62). The provincial government reasserted its drive to fiscal austerity and centralizing control in 2002 by declaring it illegal for school boards to approve a budget deficit. Districts in Toronto and Ottawa passed them anyway and were taken over by provincial supervisors. They were also unable to create balanced budgets without drastic cuts to programs and staff. With an election on the horizon, the increasingly unpopular Conservatives were pressed to restore some modest portions of funding (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 63).

While it avoided altering the formal structure of local collective bargaining, the Conservatives used their power over education finance to legislate provincial control over key aspects of teachers' professional autonomy negotiated between boards and federations. This included removing the following issues from the purview of collective bargaining, while imposing changes generally intended to reduce funding: class sizes (increased), staffing allocations (reduced), the length of school year (five more days were added), PD time (reduced), the amount of preparation time (cut in half), teachers' administrative duties (increased in addition to 'mandatory' voluntary activities). The outcome of these policies imposed by the provincial government was the reduction of approximately 10 000 teaching positions through retirements and layoffs (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 63). As Rezai-Rashti explains:

All of these policy reforms served to centralize educational decision-making and increase the ministry's control over matters of finance and curriculum that had previously been under the jurisdiction of local boards of education. In just five years (1996-2001) the Ministry of Education and Training became the main source of funding and principal regulator of education, drastically reducing the power of school boards. (2009: 309)

The final straw was perhaps an unpopular law in 2001 providing tax credits to parents for sending their children private schools. This amounted to a step in the direction of school

vouchers and was a profound form of privatization by which public funding would be redistributed to subsidize private schools (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 65). Soon after this juncture, academics at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, many of whom would later play important roles within succeeding Liberal governments, released *The Schools We Need: Recent Education Policy in Ontario & Recommendations for Moving Forward*. It was a strong critique of Conservative education policies for being too many and often harmful (Leithwood 2003 et al). It was heavily cited in the Liberal Party's campaign in the October 2003 election, won by McGuinty with a majority government. The tax credit was promptly repealed. A Conservative proposal for a revised tax credit for students attending private religious schools was widely attributed to their defeat in the 2007 election and a second majority government for the Liberals. McGuinty's government came one seat short of a majority in 2011 (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 66), but under his successor Kathleen Wynne returned to a majority in 2014.

Change & Continuity in Education Governance: Liberal Governments (2003-)

During his first term from 2003 to 2007, Dalton McGuinty carried out a key campaign promise as the self-described 'education premier' and restored \$2.6 billion in education funding (of the original \$5.4 billion cut by Harris) to hire specialist and classroom teachers to lower elementary class sizes and fund a Student Success teacher in every high school as part of an overall priority discussed in the following section to raise graduation rates (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 67). However Shilton observes, "More fundamentally, the McGuinty Liberals have shown no interest in repealing the keystone of the Harris-era centralizing reforms: central control of education funding, reflected in the provincial education funding formula." (2012: 235). Taxing

power would not be returned to local districts. Despite increases in the per-pupil student grants through which most provincial funding was directed, considerable pressure remained for districts to close small schools, as fixed costs were covered by declining enrolment, as will be discussed below in section 7.5. It was also the primary mechanism facilitating the competition for enrolment in Toronto and other large cities through ‘school choice’.

The leadership of the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) enjoyed a much better relationship with the Liberals than their predecessors who had drastically reduced their autonomy and funding while temporarily taking over their administration (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 86). Somewhat symbolically, maximum trustee compensation was raised to \$25 000 (leaving it still mostly a part time job). From the 2003 provincial election through the 2014 election, nearly all of Toronto’s 22 provincial ridings elected Liberals, making the city along with the surrounding ‘905’ suburbs the core of the party’s support in the legislature¹⁵⁸. Not insignificantly, Kathleen Wynne’s political trajectory began as a TDSB trustee in 2000, where she opposed mass school closures threatened by the Harris government’s budget cuts. Elected to the provincial legislature with McGuinty’s victory in 2003, she served as education minister from 2006 to 2010. Meanwhile, the TDSB was restructured into 20 ‘family of schools’ led by superintendents, which unlike New York City’s more amorphous school networks, was still generally aligned geographically with the city’s trustee wards, each with a total of 25-30 elementary and secondary schools. Fullan and Boyle explain how these ‘families’, larger than many districts in northern Ontario functioned in relation to the ambitious roll out of reforms from the provincial Ministry of

¹⁵⁸ Suffering in part from a popular backlash against the Harris era, the Conservatives were frozen out from winning any of Toronto’s provincial ridings in the four general elections during this period, only temporarily winning two seats in byelections.

Education:

The families of schools enjoy high levels of professional autonomy led by the superintendents with the close involvement of trustees. This independence, coupled with less direct connection from the centre to the schools in a larger organization, meant that the Ontario reforms were slower to gain traction in TDSB compared with most other school boards across the province. (2014: 87)

Fullan and Boyle observe, “the district had a tradition of operating with a degree of conflict and turmoil at the top (among the trustees, with the government)” (2014: 86). Tension with the Liberal government was limited to stated frustration over the disparity between its mandate to run new provincial programs like full day kindergarten, and insufficient funding provided to do so. However internal conflict made front page headlines in 2013 and 2014, challenging the legitimacy of its elected board as an institution. It survived, but after being subjected to a further redistribution of power to the Ontario government. A director known for a charismatic persona and ‘culture building’ events like a motivational mass rally of thousands of teachers and board staff at the start of one school year, resigned in 2013 after being found to have plagiarized a newspaper column. Together with the district’s struggle to balance its budget with received funding, one conservative columnist called it a “crisis of governance” and looked south for an alternate model, “In big cities like New York or Chicago, the head of schools is a high-profile position filled by high-calibre individuals. The TDSB needs a chief executive with experience in the business world or the broader public sector at complex administration.” (Gee 2013). In late 2014, scandal ensued again when it was revealed that the new director facilitated herself receiving a substantial raise while teachers and other employees were subjected to a wage freeze by the provincial government. Among other sources of near violent boardroom conflict, she refused to share her employment contract with trustees despite their duty to provide this

oversight. The chair of the board resigned over a controversial contract for language programs with the Chinese government and a scheme to staff private schools in Vietnam with TDSB teachers. Others were implicated in forms of influence peddling. Pundits and politicians called for a takeover by the provincial government, or inspired by US models, mayoral control (Lorinc 2014; Canadian Press 2014). The Liberal government commissioned an ‘outside expert’ to conduct a public review of the TDSB’s top administration. In addition to a “culture of fear” among senior managers and dubious ‘pet projects’, a particular problem she identified were trustees who “retained a ‘full time’ mind-set” despite their “symbolic” compensation (Wilson 2015: 5). They would intervene regularly in the work of principals in their ward, demand their participation in political events and even hold influence over their appointment (Wilson 2015).

The discrediting of the district leadership created a context for the Ministry of Education to intervene with an unpopular and seemingly unrelated agenda of closing schools with declining enrolment to sell off its valuable real estate. In the final few pages of a report focused on interpersonal dynamics and management culture, the reviewer pivots to under-utilized schools, arguing the need to sell them off to bring much needed revenue to the system, and criticizing trustees for obstructing this process due to the interests of their constituents (Wilson 2015).

Within days of the release of the review in early 2015, the education minister issued an ultimatum that the board address these findings (Sandals 2015). The budget of trustees, access to assistants and office space were considerably reduced. New plans were made to close secondary schools with low enrolment due to demographic changes and as will be discussed in section 7.6, a lack of success in the context of ‘school choice’. Embarrassing dysfunctional conflict and alleged corruption at the TDSB ultimately facilitated both a significant wave of privatization and

the further centralization of power over education policy to the provincial government. In this context, the governments of McGuinty and Wynne held considerable sway over the roll out of policy from the centre to Toronto's classrooms.

7.3: Quantifying Student Achievement: Policy from the Centre

The following section details the development of education policy primarily from the vantage point of the provincial Ministry of Education. I describe it as 'policy from the centre' to emphasize its top-down origins whereby most initiatives began with the Ministry, which actively participated in global policy networks. They were then pushed out to the school districts, which depending on the policy, held varying but generally limited scope for adaptation to local circumstances. As before, to provide context I begin with a brief overview of the significant intervention of the Harris Conservative government on teachers' professional autonomy. Then I will consider how the education policy imperatives of the Liberal McGuinty and Wynne governments, particularly their emphasis on EQAO test scores and high school graduation rates as key metrics to define their success, emerged from the Harris era, to underpin ever increasing 'layers' of top-down policy (Pinto 2015) which have increasingly defined the work of educators.

This section particularly draws on and critiques a detailed account by Michael Fullan (Fullan & Boyle 2014) of this era in which he has served as a prominent advisor to the provincial government. For his prolific and high profile interventions into provincial education policy over more than two decades, Fullan is among the few policy consultants whose name would be familiar to many Ontario teachers. His influence radiates far beyond the provincial scope he

might otherwise have as a professor emeritus and former dean of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. He is arguably one of the world's most well-known and influential education policy consultants. Toronto-based People for Education executive director Annie Kidder describes Fullan and the UK-based policy advisor Michael Barber, as “rock stars that zoom around the world” (Kidder: Interviewed Nov. 2015). In December 2016, the homepage of his consultancy website where he is described as a “worldwide authority in educational reform” touted his ongoing work with authorities in California, the Peel District School Board of Mississauga and Brampton, Ontario, and a workshop tour in Australia (MichaelFullan.ca 2016).

Near the apex of his influence, in 2010 Fullan co-chaired with Barber a large scale international conference on policy, *Building Blocks for Education: Whole System Reform* sponsored by the Ontario government and hosted by Premier McGuinty. Ministry of Education and senior school board officials learned about and spoke on ‘international benchmarks’, comparing recent changes in the systems of Australia, Finland, Singapore, Ontario and the US (Fullan & Barber 2010: 2). Keynote Andreas Schleicher, director of the OECD’s Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), argued for the importance of generating data through standardized testing, earning strong agreement from Fullan and Barber. They explained that it would constitute ‘collective autonomy’, arguing “We should not interpret the call for autonomy as a return to the autonomy of the individual teacher. ‘Behind the classroom door’ is decidedly not for fans of whole system reform.” US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan extolled merit pay for teachers and his ‘Race to the Top’ program (described in Chapter 5). Fullan disagreed in his final report, citing insufficient evidence of its efficacy and argued that it would be a “huge distractor” which the Ontario government was not interested in (Fullan & Barber 2010: 13).

Fullan's success comes in considerable part from codifying policy lessons¹⁵⁹ from his experience as a senior advisor under Dalton McGuinty into a "brand of education reform" (Sue Winton: Interviewed Dec. 2015). For these reasons I believe it is worthwhile analyzing at length his portrayal of the education policies in Ontario which he has helped to engineer. I take a critical approach to some of the McGuinty era policies which he stands behind, particularly the reliance on EQAO standardized test score results to evaluate the Ontario education system, and the drive to raise graduation rates without considering its effects on the integrity of classroom teaching. Overall, I am critical of his embrace of top-down policy in the Ontario context, insofar as it does not take seriously the capacity of teachers to effectively exercise their professional judgement. As a result, this chapter contends that their classroom autonomy has been undermined. However as Kidder observed in Chapter 4, in the context of the dominant policy discourses in the US, Mexico and many other countries like the UK, his "brand is not to attack teachers". In his later writings (Fullan 2016), he has clarified his criticism of No Child Left Behind's punitive approach of firing teachers and closing struggling schools. He also recognizes that teachers draw significant satisfaction from a feeling of having exercised their professionalism well and that accordingly merit pay is a "wrong driver" for reform. Fullan has even critiqued top-down reform more generally (but not in reference to Ontario), recognizing that more often than not these policies fail to connect with the realities of teachers' work lives. However his chief remedy is to scale down from working through civil servants, administrators and politicians at the national or

¹⁵⁹ He has written dozens of books drawing on his experiences as a policy advisor, many published by the Ontario Principal's Council. They are decidedly unacademic in tone, marketed in an airport bookstore business empowerment style including *Changes Forces: Probing the Depths of Educational Reform*, *Changes Forces: The Sequel*, *Change Forces with a Vengeance*, *Leading in a Culture of Change*, *The Six Secrets of Change*, *The Challenge of Change*, *Change Wars*, *Freedom to Change*, *Motion Leadership in Action*, *Professional Capital*, and *The New Meaning of Educational Change*.

the state/provincial level to the district level. The voice of classroom teachers remains marginalized because he does not acknowledge or take seriously the contradicting power relationships of schools and school districts as hierarchical workplaces. Administrators and superintendents do not necessarily understand or sympathize with the realities of teachers' work or share the same interests, as teachers and principals themselves will argue in the following sections. Nevertheless, while Fullan is a focus of critique, he is symptomatic of the post-Harris Conservative experience in Ontario generally, of a softer neoliberalization of education, in contrast to the pro-privatization, anti-labour approach of Governor Cuomo in New York State or Mexicanos Primero and President Enrique Peña Nieto in Mexico.

Harris Conservatives Set the Context for Policy from the Centre

Drawing on recommendations of the Royal Commission on Learning from the preceding New Democratic government, in 1996 the Conservatives established the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) soon after their election as an independent agency responsible for administering standardized testing within the public education system¹⁶⁰. The EQAO phased in tests from 1997 to 2002 of reading, writing and math in grades 3 and 6, math in grade 9 and reading and writing in grade 10 (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 61-62). The tests were strongly opposed by teachers and their federations, among other grounds, that they would narrow instruction. Under pressure to obtain high scores for a school, teachers would divert time otherwise spent on regular course content to drilling students on the specific knowledge most likely found on the

¹⁶⁰ A strong parallel can be drawn here with the creation of the Mexican National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (INEE) in 2002 (described in Chapter 6), which was similarly autonomous from the main education administration, also with the rationale that formal separation would increase the testing agency's objectivity.

tests. ‘Teaching to the test’ would constitute a significant threat to professional autonomy, as teachers in the US and Mexico could corroborate. Except for the grade 10 literacy test¹⁶¹, the EQAO tests would not be considered directly ‘high stakes’ for teachers or students in the way that they are in New York State, where they decide teacher employment and student graduation (in the case of the high school Regents exams) or in Mexico where the ENLACE also determined teacher employment and salary increases¹⁶². Elsewhere in Canada, provincial exams comprise 40 percent of a student’s final marks in grades 10 through 12 in British Columbia and 50 percent of final grade 12 marks in Alberta (Wallner 2014: 79). The primary significance of the EQAO test scores was indicative, to provide an analysis of the system as a whole, as well as individual schools. While lacking a direct punishment capacity as US standardized tests did through No Child Left Behind, through which consistently low scoring schools could be closed and their staff fired, the results similarly received a wide public release and as will be argued below, were linked to more subtle forms of pressuring and shaping teachers’ work. As Spencer (2012) contends, the highly centralized record keeping practices to which the school-level administration of the EQAO contributes, is a form of ‘governance at a distance’ through the audit of local authorities.

Pinto (2012) critiqued the outsourcing of provincial curriculum development under the Harris Conservatives to non-profit and for-profit consultants for its lack of accountability to both the educators who would be required to follow their guidelines and the broader community. She

¹⁶¹ Students must pass this test to eventually graduate from high school. In the case of failure, they must take the test again the following year. If again unsuccessful, they are enrolled in a ‘Literacy’ course, which from the author’s personal experience as a teacher, has a very high pass rate.

¹⁶² See the respective New York and Mexico City chapters above for a complete analysis of the standardized tests in these cities.

found a loss of internal capacity through privatization under the Conservatives to accommodate the rapid rewriting of high school subjects curriculum. Teachers were hired through external companies and given limited autonomy due to hierarchy, tight timelines, and the government's prioritization of input from business lobby groups. However it is consistent with neoliberal governance, despite this and other examples of outsourcing, the capacity of the Ministry under Harris to regulate teachers' work greatly increased. In addition to reintroducing streaming for grades 9 and 10, declaring supervision of extracurricular mandatory (though seldom enforced), it created the professional regulatory body Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) in 1997 (again following recommendations from the previous government). The OCT produced the *Standards of Practice* document which defined teacher professionalism in broad terms that were largely taken for granted.

More controversially, in 2001 the OCT was tasked by the government with administering the Ontario Teacher Qualifying Test (OTQT)¹⁶³ an exam for all new applicants for teaching positions, and a requalifying test for teachers every five years. Both resembled the standardized evaluations of the Ley de Servicio Profesional Docente discussed in the previous chapter that have been bitterly resisted by the Mexican teachers' movement. The primary system for evaluating teachers through principal observations was standardized with the Teacher Performance Appraisal (TPA) process consisting primarily of two formal classroom observations every two years, and the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) of two observations of teachers in each of their first two years (Rezai-Rashti 2009: 309-310; Fullan & Boyle 2014: 62; Shilton 2012: 234). Interviews by Pinto, Portelli et al (2012) with 41 Ontario elementary and secondary

¹⁶³ Development was outsourced by the Conservatives to a US testing agency (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 62).

school administrators on what makes a good teacher found that they drew largely on two popular archi-types, the ‘charismatic teacher’ possessing intrinsic intangible skills (caring, firm, a good communicator, etc), and that of ‘competency’ more reflective of the official discourse of the Ministry of knowledge of curriculum and policy. Pinto, Portelli et al conclude, “NTIP reflects a knowledge transmission model of induction, whereby the focus is on conformity and the transference of so-called “expert” knowledge.” (2012: 79). They argue that neither the criteria of NTIP nor that of individual administrators encouraged independence on the part of teachers. While arguably superior to Mexico’s standardized teacher exams in assessing how teachers work in the classroom, Ontario’s NTIP and TPAs rely heavily on the subjective perceptions of principals, which mostly align with dominant discourse from Ministry, and do not tend to encourage alternative or critical approaches to pedagogy and instruction by teachers

Rezai-Rashti (2009) summarizes the impact of the Harris era on teachers’ work as intensification (new curriculum squeezing new content into fewer courses, budget cuts leading to larger class sizes and less prep time) and reorganization. The latter was comprised of the replacement of high school department heads with subject-area expertise by a system of around four teachers as Curriculum Leaders each responsible for several subject areas. As Curriculum Leaders would usually not be personally experienced in all of the several subject areas for which they were responsible, their duties veered away from actually being curricular leaders. Rezai-Rashti describes this as a shift from skilled veteran teachers to ‘teacher-managers’ “...whose main responsibility is to administer government-mandated policies in local schools” (2009: 316). Meanwhile the new provincial curriculum was more prescribed, with detailed lists of ‘overall expectations’ and ‘specific expectations’ meaning less teacher discretion in interpreting courses.

Some teachers interviewed by Rezai-Rashti suggested this could provide students with a clearer idea of where marks came from. Overall he argues these changes had a profoundly adverse impact on teachers' professional autonomy, and that the "...impact of restructuring was felt most strongly in Toronto, where more progressive ideas and support mechanisms had been in place." (Rezai-Rashti 2009: 312).

Rezai-Rashti found that at least some veteran teachers were able to continue to exercise a fair amount of autonomy in the face of these top-down reforms, bringing to mind Larry Cuban's comments in Chapter 2 on the persistence of classroom autonomy despite major top-down policies. One experienced teacher explained:

I have been teaching long enough to see a number of different things come and go through the years, and generally what you do, if you're in a position where you already have a permanent contract, and it is unlikely you would be called up on the carpet, and you have seniority...is take what you like from these changes that come about, and the things you think are best suited to the particular subject area that you're teaching...if I were a beginning teacher or even mid-career looking at another ten or fifteen years, then I would definitely address these things in a much more serious way. ...my situation is somewhat different, so I have been picking and choosing a little bit. (Rezai-Rashti 2009: 313)

Accordingly, Rezai-Rashti argues that the strongest impact of the Harris era reforms on teachers' professional work was on new teachers with less experience, ability or confidence to push existing professional autonomy to the hilt in response to reforms. He concludes pessimistically:

...there have been no substantial structural changes in the everyday practices of schooling. The reorganization of the education system institutionalized by the former Conservative government is now so entrenched that the potential for any substantial changes to the system are limited. (Rezai-Rashti 2009: 318)

Pinto concurs that from the Conservatives to the Liberals in 2003, “Ontario’s core education policy has remained largely unchanged while the neoliberal rhetoric has persisted” (2015: 143). I will now attempt to assess the extent to which this is the case.

Change & Continuity in Education Policy: the Liberal governments of McGuinty & Wynne (2003-2016)

Dalton McGuinty’s government intervened quickly after taking office to change some significant aspects of teacher evaluation instituted under Harris. The OTQT qualifying standardized test and recertification requirements were eliminated, while the performance appraisal was shifted from every two years to every five years, and the New Teacher Induction Program was retained (Rezai-Rashti 2009: 309; Shilton 2012: 234; Pinto, Portelli et al 2012). The broader trend under Harris of rolling out layer upon layer of top down policy from the centre continued and arguably intensified. Pinto did not see substantial changes towards more democratically engaging educators and communities in curriculum development during McGuinty’s first term (2012: 206-207). Under McGuinty, the Ministry did substantially expand its capacity as it centralized its control from local school districts over education policy. Through this process, policymaking became more politicized according to OSSTF president Paul Elliot:

It really came to fruition, the whole shift in power, after Harris left, but he was the one who started the ball rolling. When he shifted the funding to the provincial government, it really became more political than it ever was before. Locally, it was just locally political, some people couldn’t even tell you who the trustees were... McGuinty, as much as he may have been known as the education premier, it really all had to do with the directives and policies that came out...[T]he exponential growth of the Ministry of Education, of policy advisors specifically. ... Because now, if they were funding it, they really took control over of the direction of education. That’s when we began to see the drive to increase graduation rates. (Interviewed Sep. 2016)

Elliot continues, explaining how in his opinion, the steady expansion of the Ministry of

Education under McGuinty and Wynne created its own rationality for ever expanding policy:

Every time I go over there, you're always meeting new policy people. And they come and go so quickly. Case in point, when I went to the last central table in bargaining, we talked about Ministry initiatives. We got them to agree to a one year hiatus on Ministry initiatives. They were just aghast. They said to us, 'you have no idea what you're asking us to do.' Because it was almost impossible for them to do that because they are driven by new initiatives. Without initiatives, they don't exist for any reason. You had whole floors of people who would continue working on new initiatives because that's what they do. (Interviewed Sep. 2016)

Certainly, this explanation of institutional self-perpetuation is far from Fullan and Boyle's account below of 'morally driven' policy reform.

The most significant part of the McGuinty government's education policies centred around measures intended to produce increases in the annual EQAO tests instituted under Harris, as they were assumed to be the most accurate form of measuring the system's overall effectiveness, and increasing high school graduation rates while requiring youth to remain in school until 18. As noted in Chapter 4, Fullan and Boyle attribute the Liberal government's emphasis on improving 'literacy and numeracy' to a trip by McGuinty to England in the late 1990s, where the future premier observed Fullan's work there as an assistant to Prime Minister Tony Blair. They credit McGuinty with leaving behind Blair's more punitive policies in which schools performing badly on tests were subject to "assertive name-and-shame accountability" (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 67). The Ontario government established a Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat in 2004 to coordinate school strategies aimed at improving scores. Raising graduation rates would be the subject of projects grouped under the Student Success Initiative (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 67-70). In contrast to Pinto, Fullan and Boyle claim that the McGuinty

government did increase the involvement of teachers in developing the Student Success, Literacy and Numeracy programs, especially relative to the Harris government, “The unwritten message was that schools and teachers needed to be key participants in improvement and that their ideas and knowledge mattered. This was a smart move early in the strategy, as it demonstrated trust in the profession, an essential ingredient for an effective partnership and buy-in from teachers.” (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 68).

Fullan and Boyle tout their model of a balance of ‘pressure and support’, which they contend was followed by the McGuinty government during this period, with the subsequent successes that ensued in terms of higher EQAO scores and graduation rates. Rather than the punitive consequences for low scores seen in the contemporary UK or the US under NCLB, in 2006 the Ontario Focused Intervention Partnership (OFIP) was created through which elementary schools with low or stable scores received additional support. Initially, \$25 million was spread over 1100 schools (\$27 000 each), including 150 TDSB schools, reduced to 10 by 2013, as their scores rose (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 72, 89). Fullan and Boyle describe the basis behind the program’s success, claiming that it motivated teachers to be proactive where they previously were not:

Before intervention, more teachers blamed external factors such as poverty roughly 2:1. After OFIP, the opinions shifted 1:2, with more teachers admitting they could do something about it. Across the province the OFIP program was a big success. Combining high expectations, nonjudgemental (positive) stances towards the schools, and targeted and ongoing support for capacity building... (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 91)

The number of low achieving schools was reduced, due to the “involvement of superintendents, a shift from professional development to professional learning, more sophisticated use of data, and a deliberate focus on improving teaching.” (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 91). EQAO scores and high

school graduation rates rose during McGuinty's first term from 2003 to 2007, Fullan and Boyle say due to: "a combination of focus, new resources, and mutual commitment between the government and schools" (2014: 73).

To make it easier for more students to graduate, the Specialist High School Majors (SHSM) program was launched in 2006, where school developed 'specialist programs' with connections to local businesses and industry. Students could earn additional credits through work placement programs and free community college courses. Within a few years, 38 000 students had enrolled in 1500 programs at 647 high schools, representing 12 percent of all secondary students (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 70). Fullan and Boyle give credit to this program for substantially boosting graduation rates. The program had a proportionally much lower enrolment in TDSB, with only 1700 participating students as opposed to 4800 if involvement was in proportion to the rest of the province. They blame TDSB trustees for obstructing the program for reasons that are unstated (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 91). Fullan and Boyle also herald a shift from formal professional development sessions to improve teaching to "ongoing learning in schools", collectively facilitated by teachers especially in high schools. "Through moderated marking and co-teaching, this form of professional learning has also moved schools on. Some refer to it as the deprivatization of the classroom...". It was "not being mandated or part of a deliberate strategy" (2014: 95) suggesting it was bottom-up, though they later explain these programs were launched by superintendents.

Fullan and Boyle describe the Ministry's activity from 2008 to 2012 in which Fullan was embedded, "The reforms picked up momentum in the second phase, and the sheer volume of work is enormous." (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 74). The *Energizing Ontario Education* (2008) policy

document retained the prioritization of increasing the proportion of students scoring above 70 percent on math and literacy tests, and set a target of 85 percent of high school students graduating within five years by 2011, up from 68 percent in 2003¹⁶⁴. Initiatives were also launched to raise EQAO scores among marginalized groups, including Indigenous students, recent immigrants and students from low income families (Ontario 2008: 5-9). Seventy two percent of students graduated high school within the standard four years by 2010, reaching 84 percent in five years by 2012. Meanwhile, the proportion of students achieving 70 percent and up on the grade 9 math score increased from 59 percent in 2007 to 73 percent in 2012. These numbers on the grade 10 literacy test declined slightly over these years from 79 percent to 77 percent (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 80, 81). In the TDSB, EQAO test scores for grades 3 and 6 closely tracked Ontario averages from 2003-2012. They remained consistently a couple percentage points below on the grade 9 math and grade 10 literacy test, as well as on the graduation rate. Consistent with their focus on the agency of their policy and dismissal of structural causes, they blame this on the lower TDSB uptake of the SHSM program (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 98-100). Fullan and Boyle attribute the success of McGuinty's 'Ontario Strategy' of which Fullan was a part, as having a "small number of ambitious goals" and a "focus on data as an instrument of continuous improvement" (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 85). They note approvingly that the "TDSB is one of the leading boards in the province in using data to measure outcomes and inform decisions and instructional practices" (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 88). Like in New York, an Office of Accountability and Student Achievement reports to the director.

¹⁶⁴ According to OSSTF President Paul Elliot, publicized government statistics on graduation rates and EQAO test scores always use 2003 as the base year, which is when the Liberals entered office (Interviewed Sep. 2016).

People for Education's Executive Director Annie Kidder, head of Ontario's most prominent education advocacy group, contends that the government's encompassing focus on increasing test scores has created distorted priorities of helping a specific range of kids reach a specific metric, in this case, obtaining at least 70 percent (level three of four). While lauding the province's less punitive approach towards teachers and schools in comparison with the US, she comments:

So it's definitely we're going to work together [teachers, schools and the government], but it's still having very very strong overall goals, and despite it being not commonly copped to at a provincial level, it certainly has been, if our political goal is getting X percent of kids up to level 3, then certainly, high schools were told, work on the kids who are at 2.7. Really target those kids 'cause you can get them up to level 3! To us that's a bastardization of what we should be doing in our classroom. (Annie Kidder: Interviewed Nov. 2015)

Vibert observes in the context of education reform under Harris and McGuinty in Ontario, "So highly do proponents of accountability value the demonstration of improvement that the *appearance* [emphasis in original] of improvement becomes the primary consideration. As in the market, perception is reality." (Vibert 2009: 296). A high school teacher and education activist adds even more skeptically:

[T]he McGuinty government and subsequently the Wynne government is very data-driven. It's all about graduation rates, and test scores too but in particular credits earned, graduation rates...and so they came up with all these initiatives like credit recovery, credit rescue...to basically grant credits. ... So we've seen massive mark inflation... but of course they have the data. So graduation rates have gone up under the Liberals, not a surprise. When you take the Enron approach to education, if the numbers don't add up, just figure out a different way to add up the numbers. I'm speaking as somebody who doesn't even care about marks. I would be happier teaching a system that didn't give marks. (Toronto Teacher 10, Interviewed Jul. 2015)

This teacher's language implying a deliberate effort on the part of the provincial government to skew grades upwards to support their political agenda may sound like an exaggeration, or

assigning too much intent and agency. Consider however, this account by a teacher hired over the summer by EQAO to score grade 6 reading and writing tests of an incident during the grading process:

[A]fter two days of scoring, we were informed that whatever we'd been scoring as a code 20 was now a code 30 (*laughs*). We were organized in pods. Pods are two groups of approximately 30 teachers in each group, so there was 60 teachers in each room, and there are supervisors at the front... and there was an audible outcry. People were like, 'What do you mean? What do you mean all of a sudden what you told us was this is now this?' That was the curve, right? They weren't getting the results that they wanted from that particular question. ...there were some people who said, 'I don't think I can do this.' They wanted to leave. They just felt that the integrity of the process, if there was any to begin with, was completely undermined. ... [M]y guess is that the results that were coming in on the language score were lower than they wanted. ...the difference between a code 20 and a code 30 could be the difference between some students passing and some students failing. (Toronto Teacher 2: Interviewed Aug. 2014)

This teacher's experience of shifting grading criteria used by EQAO was corroborated in a separate interview with Toronto Teacher 4 who had also graded these exams.

More incredulously, Fullan and Boyle claim that the 'Ontario Strategy' was "Not top down or bottom up", citing the involvement of some school district directors in policies ultimately determined from the provincial Ministry of Education as "policy leadership from the middle" (2014: 88). After publication of *Big City School Reforms*, Fullan developed the concept of 'Leadership from the Middle'. Critiquing policy reforms from national or state/provincial governments as being too top-down, he also dismisses bottom-up (ie. teacher-led) reform as being "too piecemeal" (Fullan 2016: 203). His 'middle' is the directors of school districts, whom he urges to work together horizontally for finer grain policies than can be meaningfully elaborated and implemented from the top. The top remains important for developing the right 'drivers', such as standardized test scores to measure schools (Fullan 2016: 203-204).

Fullan and Boyle articulate their technocratic orientation underpinning many of the assumptions behind McGuinty and Wynne's 'Ontario Strategy' in explaining why test scores and graduation rates improved in the TDSB:

The alignment of data was important, coupled with the growth of skills and ability to compare and manipulate the data. ... The intense focus on higher expectations with accountability led to more precise conversations between district and school leaders about which students needed most support and how it was going to be provided. Then it was the resources, human and financial, that came with the Ontario Strategy that made the difference. Today the district and the schools feel that they are part of a larger plan. (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 90)

It is a version, albeit friendlier towards classroom teachers, of the same assumptions guiding the centralization of education governance in New York and Mexico, in which only when subjected to sufficient external pressure, will educators improve their schools, and that ultimately it is up to experts and top officials to generate the means by which this will occur. Accordingly, they are willing to share credit, "Donna Quan, Director of Education at TDSB, has evidence showing that District Reviews of schools have made the biggest impact on student achievement in recent years." (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 92). The District Reviews consists of high schools first completing 'School Effectiveness Framework' to self-assess room for improvement, then review teams visit schools to speak with staff and students, and observe them in classrooms, and scrutinize student work. "Communication is open, honest, and transparent throughout the process. The District Review Team adopts a supportive and nonjudgemental approach." (2014: 93). Fullan and Boyle note that the process was developed with union consultation. This likely helped create a process that was less punitive or adversarial than New York Mayor Bloomberg's initial letter grades for schools. "Current conversations focus on the differences between a good and a great school." they note optimistically (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 93). In addition to all high

schools completing these reviews within three years, principals in consultation with teacher Curriculum Leaders complete annual ‘School Improvement Plans’, which are appended to the ‘Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement’ submitted to the Ministry. Individual schools and the TDSB as a whole must explain how they will make improvements in “literacy, numeracy, learning pathways, community, culture, and caring” At least the first two are defined by EQAO scores. Anecdotally, according to teachers cited in the following section and administrators interviewed by Pinto (2015), it is these more quantitative criteria that are politically more significant, making these policy plans reminiscent of the ‘Quality Schools Program’ (PEC) instituted in Mexico during this period.

Reading Fullan and Boyle’s chapter on Ontario education policy and its roll out in Toronto, it is striking that while the authors take pains to distinguish their endorsed strategy from the punitive contemporary ones of New York and England, they retain the use of standardized test scores as a primary metric with which to judge the system’s progress. Moreover there is a very clear imperative woven throughout of the necessity of year over year sustained, rapid improvement on all fronts. How feasible is this to maintain indefinitely? How does this affect the system? Is there a dumbing down of credit integrity, or of the standardized exams themselves? Teachers interviewed in the following section do believe that constantly rising progress has been achieved at least partly through weakened standards. Their voices are nowhere to be found in Fullan and Boyle’s accounts. Yet these authors also criticize contemporary trends in “negative accountability, isolated school autonomy, the continued deterioration of the teaching profession...” (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 145).

The policy imperative of constantly rising graduation rates is thornier. Students without a high school diploma hold limited options for a life without poverty. Raising the proportion of youth in high school also requires increasingly high amounts of resources, as OSSTF president Paul Elliot explains:

If you want to get to 95 percent, it's a huge influx of money. ... It's at about 85 now? If they want to get to 90, it's a huge step in support to get to 90 because the next 5 percent are going to take such an increased level of support, attention, different kinds of programs... (Interviewed Sep. 2016)

Additional Special Education classes with very low teacher to student ratios, more educational assistants, youth workers and counsellors are required to effectively accommodate students who often suffer from a range of emotional and mental health issues. If they had a choice, by the age of 16 or 17, many would drop out of school, as was the case in previous decades. The gritty realities of this are not captured in Fullan and Boyle's bird's eye system analysis. What we see instead are a parade of good intentions from the McGuinty government and their colleagues at the top of the TDSB. Providing the necessary resources to keep a growing proportion of youth in school precipitates a collision with austerity politics, which in regards to education, became pronounced in Ontario from 2012 onwards, threatening the incremental improvements in funding of the Liberal's first two terms. These developments will be further discussed in the final two sections of this chapter.

Criticism of the top-down education policy of the Liberal premiers and traditional skepticism of academics and civil servants were opportunistically employed in the 2014 education platform of the hard-right Conservative candidate Tim Hudak. His education white

paper claimed to champion “a teacher and principal driven system”, and dismissed the work of Fullan and other policy advocates contracted by the Liberals:

Only the classroom teacher really knows the particular needs of your child. When it comes to education, a key principle for the Ontario PC Caucus is that decisions made by individuals closest to students and parents work better than those made by big bureaucracies. We believe that the community school ought to be the key unit in the system, and that the teachers and their principal are the most important players. Right now, education bureaucrats at Queen’s Park, the school boards and teachers’ unions are the key players. The teacher is the most unempowered person in this top-down system. ... We believe teachers should be respected enough to make decisions in their own classrooms. (Progressive Conservative Party 2013: 10)

The Conservative’s strategy here of lauding teachers as a profession in their appeal to parents should be considered in the context of the unpopularity gained by the last Conservative premier Mike Harris who attacked teachers in television and radio ads for protesting the policies of his government. It also suggests that while resentment or skepticism of top-down policy is widespread, the Conservatives believed a juxtaposing of ‘out of touch’ technocracy against classroom teachers would help garner popular support from voters for their education platform. On the following page of the policy document under the heading ‘A realistic definition of a teachers’ job’, it is clear that despite the Conservative’s claimed view of top-down policy, teachers would continue to be disempowered. Principals would have increased power to assign them additional non-classroom duties and change the composition and size of their classes as the government would remove these issues from collective bargaining (Progressive Conservative Party 2013: 11-12).¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ Where this approach fit into their austerity agenda is seen in the next section, ‘How to do more when money is tight’. It is explained that by increasing class sizes, close to half a billion dollars could be cut by having fewer teachers. The platform also recommended cutting 10 000 jobs dismissed as ‘non-teaching’ positions, primarily educational assistants, youth workers, custodians and school secretaries. The Conservatives earned the fervent opposition of teachers, education workers and their unions, helping the Liberals return to power in 2014 with a majority government, despite the latter’s attack on collective bargaining rights in 2012 (see section 7.6).

For Fullan and Boyle, success in school districts can chiefly be attributed to the agency of directors, superintendents and provincial Ministry officials. In this hierarchical view, the role of the classroom teacher is more implicit, reduced to people who carry out policies from above to which they must be accountable. In reading their account, one gets a strong impression that little consultation was done with school staff (teachers and administrators), and a great deal was done with other policy leaders at TDSB headquarters and the Ministry offices. This would appear to be a reflection of the practices of the provincial government and the school district, according to OSSTF Toronto Vice President Leslie Wolfe:

The level to which the provincial governments under McGuinty and Wynne have infiltrated, extended themselves into the development of curriculum, the implementation of curriculum, the funding, the standardization of curriculum and the standardization of expectations of performance by teachers and students, all of that has come together to, whether in actuality or in perception, make teachers feel like they have very little professional control over what's happening in the classroom. (Interviewed Sep. 2016)

Wolfe subsequently qualifies her comments that in comparison with McGuinty, the latter Wynne government since 2013, likely preoccupied with the implementation of full day kindergarten, has been more restrained in rolling out new policy initiatives at the secondary level, "To be fair, I think she's been more sensitized to our complaint that too much, too fast, too many changes, not enough time or professional development to implement any of them properly." (Interviewed Sep. 2016).

As has been suggested here, the official record of the progress and success of the McGuinty and Wynne government's test score and graduation rate driven interventions into education policy, as presented by Fullan and Boyle, is open to contestation. Some argue it has distorted a significant part of the focus of education policy by fixating on improving the abstract

metrics given so much political weight. It will be argued in the following section that such policies have had a significant impact on teachers' work, and an adverse effect on their professional autonomy.

7.4: Quantifying Student Achievement: Impact on the Classroom & Professional Autonomy

“It's always better to give a higher mark than a lower one. Always. Cause of those three, you know, the parents, the admin and the colleague? That'll make it easier for you in all of those circumstances. And the kid. It makes your life easier, so just hand out the high marks and pretend...swallow your integrity and give the high marks because it makes everything easier. Everyone's happy then.” (Toronto Teacher 8, Interviewed Jul. 2015)

“It feels less and less like a respected profession, and more like being a hired babysitter, in terms of my feelings of how I feel like I'm treated by the board and the adminI don't feel as valued or respected. It's harder and harder to do my job effectively in the classroom cause I don't feel that there are as many supports.” (Toronto Teacher 6, Interviewed Mar. 2015)

The previous section gave an overview of how the Liberals drew on the centralization of governance to the provincial level under the Harris Conservatives to implement layers of policy downwards onto the TDSB, in a context where education remained politically sensitive. I now draw on teachers' perspectives on how this has affected their work. As will be emphasized in the following two sections, these provincial policies affect schools differently. An important variable is the socioeconomic context of their students, creating varying pressures depending on graduation rates, EQAO test scores, and the school's desirability under 'school choice'. I begin by exploring how the downward flow of policies from the Ministry, to the TDSB and the principals to implement in their schools, has affected the latter's relationship with teachers. I find that changes in the responsibilities of administrators have contributed to modifying their power dynamics with teachers, as the work of principals becomes increasingly centred around ensuring

compliance with Ministry and district policies. The professional autonomy of teachers to assess how to best meet the specific needs of their students is continually challenged by the pressure to meet provincially set targets for test scores and graduation rates, and the imperative of implementing ‘layers’ of centrally devised policies (Pinto 2015) towards these ends. As in New York City, the imperative of showing continual quantifiable improvement, creates the pretext at the school and classroom level for administrators to intervene in teachers’ work.

Changing dynamics in the roles of administrators & their relations with teachers

As noted earlier, a watershed moment in the working experience of Ontario teachers occurred when the Mike Harris Conservatives legislated the removal of principals and vice principals from any form of union organization under the provincial Labour Relations Act (Shilton 2012: 223). OSSTF Toronto Vice President Leslie Wolfe explains it was:

...a punitive measure after they supported teachers in our political protest in 1997. ...it wasn’t an original part of Bill 160, but he said ‘principals are not teachers, they’re managers, therefore they don’t belong in the union...’ (Interviewed Sep. 2016)

For teachers employed during this period, a shift in power dynamics and roles was perceptible:

Definitely since when I first started teaching to now, the role of the admin has become very adversarial. Whereas when I first started teaching, it was much more collegial. The principals and vice-principals were part of our union. ... And that was a completely different feeling. As soon as they were taken out of the union they were made to choose if they wanted to continue on being administrators or if they wanted to stay in the union then they went back to teaching in the classroom. As soon as that happened, you could feel a definite shift to a them versus us feeling. The role of the principal seems to be a lot more punitive towards teachers. It feels like they're middle-managers. They don't feel like teachers. (Toronto Teacher 6: Interviewed Mar. 2015)

Another veteran teacher at a different school used similar terms to describe the shift from collegiality to a hierarchical “manager versus employee system” (Toronto Teacher 3: Interviewed

Aug. 2014). Wolfe argues that even without returning school administrators to the federations, greater collaboration could have been fostered:

What could have happened, subsequent to the demise of the Harris [Conservatives] is that there could have been a focus on creating a model of education where principals were seen as lead teachers. ... What's happened instead was that principals have become truly, I call them on-site managers. They're not lead teachers. They have nothing to do with curriculum development and implementation. (Interviewed Sep. 2016)

Instead of striving to understand the particularities of their school's community and build consensus for improvements derived from that context, as Wolfe contends was more commonly the case when she began teaching in the mid 1980s, now they're mainly responsible for implementing and managing top-down policies and reporting on local results. Consultation with teachers is not as important:

They are now small business/public relations managers whose job it is to implement at the school level what's trickling down from the government and through the board to the schools. I would say that that approach to change and the separation of the principal from being the lead teacher into being the 'manager' of these people who must implement the changes they're being told to implement has also created that sense of loss of autonomy and increased stress. ... [I]t started under Harris, but really under McGuinty all this top down kind of new curriculum, new expectations, new approaches to teaching, is really the culprit. Principals have been probably as much a victim of it, although they probably don't recognize that necessarily as a group, they might as individuals, as teachers have been. (Leslie Wolfe: Interviewed Sep. 2016)

Pinto argues that 'policy layers' around literacy, numeracy and graduation rates from the Liberals on top of the Conservatives have been overwhelming for principals and teachers, describing a "neoliberal move to mandate staggering volumes of new policy" (Pinto 2015: 140). In Ontario's context, she describes "policy texts as regulatory mechanisms that increase state control over educators" (Pinto 2015: 140-141). According to Pinto, a key form in which neoliberal education policy has affected the professional autonomy of principals and teachers has

been the usage of standardized tests, arduous reporting requirement and ‘highly prescriptive policy’ which has placed their work under greater surveillance as a form of ‘audit culture’. She explains:

Audit practices intensify educators’ labour processes by encroaching on technical control through management systems with reductive and prescriptive mandates. Within this accountability vacuum, schools find themselves privileging certain practices, while detracting from educators’ autonomy to make choices that they believe would better serve the needs of students. (Pinto 2015: 142)

A similar conclusion is drawn by Vibert on the impact of top-down policy on teachers’ work in Ontario, describing a process of deskilling and disempowering, where educators lose their capacity to exercise professional judgement:

The consequence for teachers and especially for principals is that their time is increasingly taken up with documenting their work, filling forms, and sending information back to the system. In the process, of course, the work of teachers and principals is redefined in technocratic terms: no longer agents in the ongoing debate about purposes and practices that historically was central to education, they become technicians who ‘implement’ a given curriculum and ‘administer’ prescribed tests. (Vibert 2009: 301)

Reporting to the provincial government on the culture of the TDSB’s senior administration, Margaret Wilson cites a principal’s account, “Every Executive Superintendent generates work for the principal in terms of reports as do the constant flow of new initiatives. Life becomes a paper chase leaving little time for the real job, curriculum leadership” (Wilson 2015: 13).

Ontario high school principals and vice principals interviewed by Pinto (2015), most frequently cited the government’s Student Success Initiative, lauded in the section above by Fullan and Boyle as being responsible for higher graduation rates, as particularly onerous and frustrating. Key concerns were that the policies were frequently disconnected from school realities and that they had to implement them regardless or face disciplinary consequences (Pinto

2015: 146). Pinto found the:

intensity of accountability measures within policy results in the inability for educators to step back from their immediate demands and consider broader educational issues or look at these practices in a more holistic sense. This amounts to intensification: profound changes through more of the same work, or signification of different work tasks being assigned, such as record-keeping and administration. Characteristics in school settings include: a perceived lack of time; chronic work overload; replacing time spent caring for students with meeting administrative demands; enforced diversification of expertise; and pre-packaged curricula and pedagogy. (Pinto 2015: 142)

Many of these issues are highly similar to those raised by teachers in previous chapters, as well as below in this section. School administrators frequently viewed the policy as the product of an ‘ivory tower’ removed from school realities or of political imperatives to get quantitative results on test scores and graduation rates. They also complained that policies were sometimes contradictory and were generally top-down in conception and implementation, with little consultation with school staff. Their standardized character meant they did not meet the specific needs of individual schools and their communities. Time was lost for addressing local issues not identified by central policy (Pinto 2015: 146-148). One principal interviewed by Pinto explained:

The way for me to get promoted in this system is to be very initiative-driven. And I can let the whole school fall apart, but if my [policy] initiatives have very good scores, I’m going to have a circle of people thinking I’m doing a good job. Not the kids, not the teachers, but at the board level, because my spreadsheets look good. (Pinto 2015: 150)

Winton and Pollock concur:

Under neo-liberalism, strong and poor performance are attributed to schools and individuals rather than socio-political, economic, or cultural factors. School leaders are individuals who are increasingly held responsible for students’ academic achievement (defined as high test scores). Thus, a successful school leader under neo-liberalism is one whose students demonstrate high achievement on standardised tests. (2016: 21-22)

Researchers differ to some extent on the degree of agency held by school administrators in pushing back against top down policies that they do not find to be in their school’s interests.

Vibert reports that the Toronto principals she interviewed consciously tried to minimize time spent on Ministry and board initiatives that they believe have little direct benefit to their students. However they also know that career security and advancement depends on their at least nominal participation, what Pinto (2015) refers to as “fear driven compliance”. While Ontario principals and vice principals interviewed by Pinto complained that their professional autonomy was undermined, she found that participants did not actively or even passively resist provincial policy, however much they disliked it. Some would engage in self-conscious ‘performativity’ to elicit desired responses from the Ministry (Pinto 2015: 150). Despite their lower rank, teachers may have more agency in this regard due to union protection through the ability to grieve infringements on professional autonomy, and due process rights if accused of insubordination. Moreover, in a typical secondary school, the ratio of teachers to principals is higher than principals to superintendents within the TDSB’s ‘families of schools’, making surveillance of principals easier. A study by Winton and Pollock (2016) of Ontario elementary school principals suggests that administrators do in fact exercise some agency in prioritizing school activities towards goals identified by the local community such as school climate, student well-being, as well as academics, rather than the Ministry’s singular neoliberal focus on boosting EQAO and international test scores. This is particularly the case when they are supported by an active group of parents (Sue Winton: Interviewed Dec. 2015). However as in New York and in Mexico under the ENLACE exam, EQAO test scores (especially at the elementary level) and high school graduation rates have become a key basis for supervising principals. The ensuing pressure flows downwards.

The pressure of continually rising graduation rates on the classroom

A Toronto OSSTF leader and several high school teachers interviewed suggested that provincial and thereby school board pressure on educators and schools to raise EQAO test scores is much more significant at the elementary level. A Curriculum Leader at one of the case study schools explains:

I don't hear the English department complain about it much. Heck, most of these teachers started teaching around the same time the literacy test came into being in the first place. It's so second nature. It's always been there, so I don't think they question it. How much time goes into prep... I think most English teachers argue that they do everything that is on the literacy test. I remember more talk about that before. (Toronto Teacher 5: Interviewed Mar. 2015)

The implication here is that the EQAO has little direct impact on teachers' instructional time outside of time spent directly writing the test, since they feel most skills tested by the exam are addressed through the existing curriculum and do not receive any direction otherwise. This was borne out in my prior experience teaching grade 10 English with students who were generally strong academically. I applied my professional judgement, supported by the department, that only two classes of practice drills directly related to the test were necessary. Another teacher of grade 10 English commented:

I used to be super resentful of it, I thought we could be spending our time in much more constructive ways. And I also really used to feel that if a kid passes English that should be enough to show literacy. It definitely does encroach on our professionalism, and it does feel like it undermines our judgment. I guess I'm just so used to it now that I don't get as annoyed. But it does feel like the month of March is kind of a waste. In some schools they spend all of grade 9 and all of grade 10 leading up to it, preparing for the test, which I think is such a shame because, there's things on that test, I don't know who decided that that's what literacy is, but it's hilarious. (Toronto Teacher 4: Interviewed Nov. 2014)

In 2011-12, the proportion of the TDSB's grade 10 students enrolled in academic courses

who passed the Literacy test the first time was 87.8 percent, dropping to 37.4 percent for students in the applied stream (Parekh 2013: 5). A teacher of an applied level¹⁶⁶ English class recounted the considerable class time she must focus on preparing students for the literacy test, leading her to also question the pedagogical value of some of its segments:

With the grade 10 applied class, my real goal is to get them to pass the literacy test... While I wouldn't say I teach directly to the test, I'm definitely very aware now in my planning for that grade 10 course of what sorts of skills I need to build in that. Now granted, they're important communication skills regardless, so I don't have a problem with that aspect of teaching to the test, in terms of working more on reading comprehension, that's a very important skill. ...There are however, and especially in the last two years, additional kinds of questions...I am sometimes not even sure what they're asking, in some of those questions. So, I do find that I end up, again, teaching somewhat to the test. I spend a lot of the year just formulating questions, formulating units in ways that prepare the students for the test. (Toronto Teacher 2: Interviewed Aug. 2014)

The Curriculum Leader above who suggested the literacy test (OSSLT) did not considerably impact the work of English teachers in his department added that the test did seem to carry significant weight with the district. He did not share Fullan's respect for the Ministry's mandated School Improvement Plans:

[T]he metrics seem to matter, it's my impression that they matter more than they did before. That there's less discussion about individual cases and more on, 'well, we see your numbers are like this, we'd like to get them like this'. And of course the charade we go through every year of looking at the School Improvement Plan, saying, well, our plan is to get the OSSLT scores up by 3 percent next year. And we realize that whatever we do never has an impact...it never does. Nothing I have ever seen or heard of at any school, has anyone ever actually made a 3 percent impact because they said to make a 3 percent impact... It's made up. (Toronto Teacher 5: Interviewed Mar. 2015)

According to an OSSTF Toronto leader, whenever the union convenes a discussion on forms of job action short of a full strike, the boycott of EQAO related tasks is always recommended, with teachers describing it as a waste of time and money and an unnecessary stress on their students.

¹⁶⁶ Most grade 9 and 10 Ontario courses are streamed into two levels of difficulty, applied and academic.

When an attempt by EQAO to move the literacy test online resulted in a massive computer system crash shutting down the exam for dozens of schools in Toronto in the fall of 2016, a few dozen OSSTF Toronto members were quick to express their contempt for the test in a union Facebook discussion group. OSSTF took the opportunity in a press statement to question the value of the EQAO.

Among Toronto secondary teachers, a stronger consensus is found on the overall impact of the provincial imperative of constantly rising graduation rates on their professional autonomy. Teachers described how their professional judgement to determine grades is frequently challenged:

A lot of admin it feels like they're disconnected from what goes on in the classroom. ... they're stuck between a rock and a hard place because they're getting policies coming down from the board that they have to implement whether or not they actually make sense from an educational perspective... Like the 'pass the students at all costs.' It's more important to look good on the books and our pass rates than to actually do what's right for the kids. I'm teaching kids in grade 12 who have never actually passed a single grade in their life. If you look at their transcript for high school, almost every class they've been gifted the 50, and they were transferred all the way through elementary school from grade to grade. So I feel absolute pressure to pass kids who are illiterate in English. It doesn't sit well with me. (Toronto Teacher 6: Interviewed Mar. 2015)

This teacher, echoing a similar story described by a colleague, explains how this pressure is realized through the direct intervention of their principal who rounded up from nine the grades of every senior student:

I think the big issue is that she didn't consult or tell us ahead of time. ... There's small things that feel like they undermine our professional judgment. We've gone to school for X number of years to learn our craft. We've done tons of volunteer work before we've even started our teaching careers. Many of us have been teaching for decades. ...it makes us feel like we're not professionals. If we can't make that judgment call on final marks, what power or authority do we have in our job? (Toronto Teacher 6: Interviewed Mar. 2015)

OSSTF President Paul Elliot (Interviewed Sep. 2016) concurred that principals can employ various means to intervene in teacher grading to make it easier for students to pass courses and thereby increase graduation rates. A common unofficial policy enforced at the school level is that students could not receive a final mark between 43 and 49 percent, typically resulting in their grade being rounded upwards. Likewise, school and district policies dictate that students may have until the end of a semester to hand in an assignment. OSSTF Toronto Vice President Leslie Wolfe explained:

The principal under pressure for their school to be a top performer, in turn pressures teachers, whose student's marks might not be reflecting what the principal wants the school to look like. ...teachers feel under pressure to basically falsely inflate student marks in order to meet these needs. Or the other thing we hear is, if the students aren't succeeding to the expectations of the principal, there must be something wrong with the teacher. It's not that the teacher has tried everything and the student can't do it, it's that the teacher isn't good enough. (Interviewed Sep. 2016)

For schools with below average rates of graduation and credit accumulation¹⁶⁷, which tend to place highly on the TDSB's Learning Opportunity Index¹⁶⁸, various interventions by administrators and/or Ministry staff occur in the classrooms as part of the Student Success Initiative. In the case study school which fits this description, a teacher explained how at the behest of a vice principal, English teachers were required to use the same readings and assignments:

It takes all the joy out of my work. I feel like a robot, just handing out handouts I didn't make, and talking about things I don't care about. The vice-principal pushed... who also wanted Shakespeare removed from the texts. They wanted to do comic books instead. ... but I think they [the students] can handle Macbeth, so I planned to do it. I went rogue and taught the elevesies Macbeth! Imagine getting in trouble for doing that.

¹⁶⁷ The rate at which students pass courses.

¹⁶⁸ Along with family income, the index also considers parental education levels and the proportion of single parent families. It was last updated in 2014.

(Toronto Teacher 8: Interviewed Jul. 2015)

Her use of professional judgement as an experienced English teacher to determine the most pedagogically appropriate materials for the specific needs of her students was dismissed. This teacher then explained how assisted by Ministry and TDSB staff, administrators led staff in all departments through exercises where targets for increases in student grades are set based on diagnostic activities at the start of the year. Teachers are then required to adopt in their classrooms one of several specific ‘Evidenced Based Instructional Strategies’ (EBIS) endorsed by Ministry and TDSB staff, after creating a model lesson plan to demonstrate the teacher’s comprehension of the strategy. This teacher with 15 years of experience, noted her frustration that while being able to choose among several strategies, there was no space in which to question their pedagogical value. She also commented that by the apparent ages of the TDSB facilitators that they could not have had more than four or five years of experience as classroom teachers, despite being “totally motivated, totally on it”. She explained from her perspective how the targeting of student grades worked in her school:

I'm willing to learn new strategies, but the measuring and predicting...okay, now it's higher because I don't want to look like I haven't done my job, and they say, well, the system obviously works, look how much higher it is! Because they took what the kids did at the beginning, the first time they evaluated it, they didn't do so well. Then I did the instructional-based strategies, and so then I evaluated them on a completely different assignment, and their marks ended up being higher... or they'd say, well where do you think they'll be...and some of them ended up doing well on a very different assignment, so therefore there had been progress. It was the least scientific thing I've ever seen.
(Toronto Teacher 8: Interviewed Jul. 2015)

This teacher described how the school staff was made ‘accountable’ by administrators for their progress in relation to the targets:

Then they had, at the end of the year, all of these graphs put up on the board in the staff meeting, and they said, 'look, look, look at the change! This is the beginning of the year, this is the end of the year. Everyone is doing better.' ...math especially got hammered... with English, okay, you didn't understand the reading comprehension, but you wrote something interesting later on... we can give you marks for your thoughts. In math, you know how to do the process or you don't, so it was harder for them to... (Toronto Teacher 8: Interviewed Jul. 2015)

The teacher noted the absence of a 'control group' of comparable classes in the school. In their opinion, this undermined claims that adoption of the new teaching strategies is responsible for changes in student performance. This teacher also expressed frustration for how little attention was given to the context of her students, some of whom had seldom attended school for a few years, and who received little parental support. This comment should be considered in light of Fullan and Boyle's description above of the 'Focused Intervention Program' in schools with low graduation rates. Here an effort is indeed made to de-emphasize the importance of a student's socioeconomic and familial context in the minds of teachers, while increasing the weight assigned to an individual teacher's performance in determining the success (or failure) of a student. In sharing this experience, as this teacher also stressed to me, it is not my intention to look cynically at or dismiss all efforts by administrators, school districts or higher education officials to introduce better pedagogical techniques into classroom teaching. Virtually all teachers whom I spoke with (and with whom I have personally worked with) would agree that self-improvement is an integral part of their professional responsibility. The problem I wish to identify here are education strategies elaborated from the top (whether the Ministry, the TDSB or school principals) and then imposed on teachers with minimal consideration for their own expertise. This is how their professional autonomy is undermined.

Meanwhile, the role of Curriculum or Assistant Curriculum Leader has shifted some

towards the role of the ‘teacher-manager’ described by Rezai-Rashti (2009), Vibert (2009) and Robertson (2000). Over the past several years, the two schools in this case study and many others in Toronto, shifted independently from the initial model under Harris of four or five teacher Curriculum Leaders responsible for all academic subjects as well as Ministry initiatives such as preparation for the EQAO tests and Student Success to twice as many Assistant Curriculum Leaders, each responsible for a smaller subject area (Toronto Teachers 1 & 3, Interviewed Aug. 2014; Toronto Teacher 5, Interviewed Mar. 2015). This structure came closer to the restoration of the old department head structure¹⁶⁹ and brought more teachers onto the ‘leadership team’, assisting in making decisions affecting the school as a whole (Toronto Teacher 1, Interviewed Aug. 2014). However, their role of participating in School-Based Management and ‘School Autonomy’ type tasks of micro budgeting has increased. Assistant and Curriculum Leaders at both schools noted that final decisions always rested with the administrators, but that to varying degrees, their opinions were considered. While these respondents were clear that this position does not give them any form of managerial authority over other teachers (in large part due to the intervention of OSSTF), in other ways they have been implicated in an adversarial conflict over resources with their peers. Toronto Teacher 3 (an Assistant Curriculum Leader) described how their meetings have sometimes been dominated by debates between Assistant Curriculum Leaders over the allocation of money between departments:

There's these discussions where you watch the power of the school being allocated by dollars... And certainly, seeing shifts in that balance of power... I've watched teachers attacking other teachers around the needs of their department. Saying, ‘are these truly needs?’ Because I feel like we're all competing for limited resources, there's a little bit more conflict there than one might think. ... Because before it just came from a magical

¹⁶⁹ For example, an Assistant Curriculum Leader could be responsible for English rather than also overseeing other languages.

box and people would just dip into that box as much as possible. There's an effort to be more transparent. I wouldn't say completely transparent, but more transparent. So we can help inform the decision-making around that. ...On the other hand it provided another source of conflict, or competition over limited resources. (Toronto Teacher 3, Interviewed Aug. 2014)

With school budgets increasingly placed in defined, small funds rather than just a 'general fund', amid a context of overall budget reductions, this form of School Based Management not only extends some teachers into time consuming managerial roles of administering budgets, but into a competitive one at that. Rather than uniting in solidarity across departments and subject areas to press for more funding from the school board or the Ministry, an externally imposed context of scarcity is taken for granted and teachers are pushed into a zero sum competition with their colleagues. Another Assistant Curriculum Leader described these competitions as, "the way you get co-opted away from the real conflict... that education is not being funded enough." (Toronto Teacher 1, Interviewed Aug. 2014). Vibert (2009) describes this as another form of 'accountability' from the fiscal perspective of central authorities, as teachers and administrators discipline each other, while engaging in increased bureaucratic reporting procedures.

The continual roll out of new policy 'layers' especially under McGuinty, built on the Harris era removal of school administrators from the teachers' federations to make principals and vice principals increasingly subservient to the imperatives of the provincial government, and to a lesser extent the TDSB. This redefined role with increased 'accountability' to meeting provincially defined graduation targets, and to a lesser extent EQAO scores, flowed downwards from administrators to place more pressure on Toronto's secondary school teachers, undermining their professional autonomy in the classroom. These 'accountability' measures undermined

autonomy in distinct and uneven ways depending on the diverse constituencies of Toronto's schools. Most of the accounts by teachers in this section were from a case study school with predominantly working class students, approximately half of colour, many from families newly immigrated to Canada. Pressure here on administrators and teachers was primarily derived from a need to raise course credit accumulation and thereby graduation rates.

7.5: Quantifying Student Achievement: Intersection of Race, Class & School Choice on Teachers' Work

"If I had to choose one thing that was particularly challenging and has an impact on so many different aspects, it would really be related to evaluations, and what we can and cannot do with respect to evaluations." (Toronto Teacher 2: Interviewed Aug. 2014)

The following section will draw more on the experiences of teachers at a predominantly middle class (overwhelmingly white) school, where a bigger pressure on professional autonomy comes from parents and the Toronto institution of school choice. While this school receives less attention and concern from the Ministry and district due to its high graduation rates and EQAO scores, teachers here report that administrators are more likely to intervene in their work at the behest of parents looking to raise their children's grades, particularly when applying for universities. Teachers here also argue that in addition to the policies and programs described in the previous two sections, Ministry documents regarding the assessment and evaluation practices of teachers, particularly *Fresh AER* and its successor *Growing Success*, have had a particularly large impact on their professional autonomy. The community of predominantly affluent and well educated parents who tend to intervene to increase the marks of their children, are also active participants in Toronto's 'school choice' practices. Similar to New York in some respects, this

competition between schools to enrol predominantly white and affluent students has increased racial and class segregation within the school system, with deleterious effects on the classroom.

Provincial policy documents and student evaluations

Although not raised by Fullan and Boyle in their review of policymaking under the McGuinty government, a significant example of the Ministry's intervention into teachers' professionalism was the release of policy documents which determined how teachers should conduct student evaluations, especially Fresh AER and its successor Growing Success (introduced in Chapter 2). Fresh AER (Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting) released in 2006 by the Ministry of Education and distributed by school districts, prescribed teacher practices in respect to conducting evaluations of students. Some educators considered its emphases on transparency to students as to how evaluations are conducted and greater lenience on accepting student assignments to be pedagogically progressive and in the interests of equity for marginalized students. Ultimately these policies were in line with the Student Success Initiative's objective of increasing student pass and graduation rates. However for many teachers, with all but banning marks of zero, being required to accept assignments up to the end of the course and prohibiting late marks, to name a few issues, Fresh AER epitomized top-down government policy's effect on watering down curriculum standards and undermining professional autonomy. OSSTF President Paul Elliot described how Fresh AER resulted from a drive by the government to standardize important aspects of instructional practices across Ontario:

That was all provincially driven until people started pushing back, saying there needs to be some changes here, there needs to be some autonomy in terms of what I do in the classroom. Because they tried to make sure that an urban school in Toronto is the same

as a school in the suburbs, is the same as the schools in Ottawa, same as the schools in Kenora, which just isn't the case. (Interviewed Sep. 2016)

Four years later in 2010, Growing Success, a new policy on assessment, evaluation and reporting procedures was released by the Ontario government. As mentioned in Chapter 2, it included an explicit acknowledgement and detailed definition of professional judgement, in response to teacher and union intervention (Paul Elliot, Interviewed Sep. 2016). Compared with Fresh AER, it left more of the more specific details of policy to the interpretation of teachers. However a teacher at an affluent school argued, the perception remained among parents that marks and grades assigned by teachers could be negotiated:

[We] were given back the power of the zero, but I think that the mentality is still, do whatever it takes to not give a kid a zero. Again, that tension in the relationship, and sort of this nudge-nudge wink-wink expectation between the students and you and the parents and you and the admin and you, that you can make a zero disappear... By even suggesting that a teacher should not give a child a zero, it suggests that there's no professional judgment, right? (Toronto Teacher 2, Interviewed Aug. 2014)

Related to these pressures, OSSTF Toronto vice president Leslie Wolfe described how over the Harris Conservative and McGuinty/Wynne Liberal eras, teacher complaints about (course) 'credit integrity' issues have changed:

Credit integrity before meant did the student complete the work, did the student get the information, did the number of hours get completed. Now teachers talk about it in terms of 'did the student actually earn the mark they've been given.' Or, 'has our focus on success only being measured by standardized tests and marks outcomes, meant that we're forcing teachers to inflate the marks, and really the credit is lost', because the mark is about creating a perception of the school. (Interviewed Sep. 2016)

Under Growing Success, teachers cannot be told to change a student's grade (Ontario 2010). However under the Education Act, the primary provincial legislation governing K-12 education in Ontario, principals are the ultimate assignees of grades, enabling them to subsequently change

grades, which they frequently do according to Wolfe. According to her, this practice is most prevalent in Toronto's affluent schools:

They change marks because parents demand it, and they change marks because they think a teacher has been unfair. I've had teachers called in and disciplined because the principal thinks they're not marking fairly because the student class average is lower than what the principal wants to see it at. There's a whole equity piece in this because I would say that in the largest part, the greatest incidents of this kind of interference by the principal in the integrity in the teachers' professionalism in terms of assessing and evaluating a student, happens in the neighbourhoods where there is the highest socioeconomic factor. Where there is the greatest parental pressure and involvement, and there are much higher expectations from the community on the kids. ...in the schools that we consider high needs, we don't hear about this at all, or very rarely.¹⁷⁰ (OSSTF Toronto vice president Leslie Wolfe, Interviewed Sep. 2016)

Following in the context of an affluent school with policy aware parents, the perception exists that marks can be leveraged with the proper application of influence:

[T]here seems to be this idea, not among all the parents, but I think in the community that I've been teaching in, that teachers should make bad marks disappear. There is the flip side of a marks-driven culture. ... So there's a lot of pressure on us... to do whatever it takes to get a student a particular mark for some school [university] that they have their eye on. But essentially those marks become meaningless... because of all these limitations and all of these pressures that are exerted on professionals. And it does create conflict between teachers if two teachers are teaching the same student, and one decides to exercise their professional judgment in a way that isn't in accordance with what another teacher might do, or what the admin might do. The admin will say it's your call, but what they really mean is 'don't cause more shit for us.' (Toronto Teacher 2: Interviewed Aug. 2014)

Many activist teachers and academics, including those interviewed here, call on their colleagues and unions to build alliances with parents as one of the most important strategies for combatting the deleterious effects of degrading professional autonomy of teachers. This call is

¹⁷⁰ Wolfe did mention a secondary school in a low income community in Toronto whose principal eliminated applied courses (the academically easier tier of grade 9 and 10 courses). She believed that the principal did this to artificially boost the academic profile of his school. She notes it will actually have an immediate adverse effect on the students, regardless of how struggling students will navigate a more rigorous curriculum, as applied classes are provincially mandated to have a lower student/teacher ratio.

particularly made in reference to working class and racialized parents who are socially (and often geographically) distant from middle class and predominantly white teachers (in Canada and the US) (Hagopian 2014; Weiner 2012). In Toronto as in New York, absent a strong outreach effort, parental involvement at school is generally weak at the secondary level to virtually non-existent¹⁷¹. Unfortunately where parents tend to be considerably more active, in middle class or affluent neighbourhoods, teachers suggest that in the context of strong societal pressures and competition for entry to post-secondary education programs¹⁷², parents intervene with the objective of securing an advantage for their child. How teachers should respond requires more investigation by education activists and intellectuals. At the case study affluent school, parental intervention over grades can go as far as litigation:

I think there's a real fear that administrators are driven by fear of parents. In fact, some of them talk that way, 'we have to please the parents.' And the corollary to that is it feels like teachers aren't as supported. ... There's a thing in all of the documents that talks about teacher's discretion. It's put in there, but I feel that is being taken less and less seriously, due to this fear of accountability, this fear of, can you actually back it up? And I think, sometimes it's done from the best of reasons. Principals and vice-principals are trying to protect people from negative consequences through parents, who are increasingly litigious. Certainly there have been more lawsuits in the last couple of years at my school than I've seen in my career. (Toronto Teacher 3: Interviewed Aug. 2014)

Policy openings by the provincial government to question the professional authority of teachers in the evaluation of students are predominantly utilized by parents who through their socioeconomic status already exercise substantial agency within the education system. Self-interest, especially among the most class and racially privileged parents, has had another adverse

¹⁷¹ The author recalls working at an average sized Toronto high school with students from predominantly low income and racialized families, where the ostensibly parent-led school council in fact consisted of one parent, and experiences here and at similar schools with a tiny parental attendance at parent-teacher interview nights.

¹⁷² Ontario's public post-secondary education system is far more equitable than in the US or Mexico, possessing little substantive difference between similar undergraduate degrees offered by different universities.

impact on Toronto's public secondary schools, through the institution of school choice.

School choice, race & class dynamics

In 2006, the TDSB counted approximately 17 000 teachers and 272 000 regular elementary and secondary students (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 87). In the context of a demographic decline of families with teenage children in Toronto due to rising housing costs, but also aggressive recruitment by the publicly funded Catholic school board and the opting of some wealthy parents for private schools, by the 2015-16 school year, these numbers had declined respectively to 15 615 and 243 000¹⁷³ (TDSB 2016). The TDSB has responded by initiating specialty programs for students outside of the regular course stream, and eliminating neighbourhood boundaries for all but the most in-demand secondary schools. These few are located in the most affluent communities in the city, and in the face of great demand, limit overcrowding by enforcing neighbourhood residence as a prerequisite for enrolment. Meanwhile, other schools have increasingly opted to create their own specialty programs to attract choosy parents and avoid demographic losses to other schools. In this sense, the institution of school choice by the TDSB can be seen as more of a reaction to a specific context, than a primarily ideologically driven decision based on the supposed efficacy of competition for driving school improvement as it was in New York under Bloomberg (see Chapter 5). Nonetheless, this competition has had an adverse impact on equity. Rather than empowering all families, evidence

¹⁷³ Aside from competing with the Catholic school board and private schools for enrolment, one other way of compensating has been to recruit tuition paying international (mostly secondary) students. Their enrolment has increased by over 200% since 2001 to over 1400 students by 2015-16 (TDSB 2016: 6). It has also been selling properties from declining enrolment for more revenue, with 59 sold (often parcels of land like part of a school yard, not complete schools) from 2009 to 2016, netting over \$412 million (TDSB 2016: 35).

has emerged that school choice as in New York and elsewhere, has increased racial and class segregation in Toronto (Kurek 2016; Francis 2016; Kunin 2016).

As was explained in Chapter 5 in relation to New York, ‘school choice’ is a form of neoliberal education policy specific to urban areas sufficiently large and dense enough to include a significant number of local schools that children could plausibly commute to, with more or less assistance from their parents, in order to generate ‘market competition’ between the schools for enrolment. Lessard and Brassard observe that it has existed informally for as long as affluent parents and those familiar with the system have known how to work it. In Canada, Alberta set the precedent in 1996 (following a few US states which did so a bit earlier) to remove school boundaries (Lessard & Brassard 2009: 267). The TDSB followed suit in 1999 with the ‘optional attendance policy’, giving parents the opportunity to apply, space permitting and at the discretion of the receiving school, to schools outside their neighbourhood. Unlike New York, all students retained a right to attend their neighbourhood elementary or secondary school by default (TDSB 2004). As stated above, schools at maximum capacity may have a ‘closed’ status, restricting enrolment to the neighbourhood catchment area. An annual ‘Report Card’ on Ontario schools published by the pro-privatization Fraser Institute think tank which in part uses EQAO test scores to rank schools, is widely cited in the media. It is considered highly influential in establishing perceptions of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ schools, even attributed with affecting real estate values as parents strive to move into the neighbourhood catchment areas of in-demand elementary schools with closed enrolment (Lessard & Brassard 2009: 267). Regardless of the stated intentions of the Ministry of Education that the EQAO tests are purely indicative and unlike their equivalents in the US or Mexico, do not carry punitive consequences, in the context

of the credibility assigned by the public and the media to the Fraser Institute's report, this is not the case in practice. The viability of schools subject to Toronto's competition for enrolment depend at least in part on these metrics. Another large part depends on the racial and class-based determinations by many mobile parents of a local school's desirability.

A TDSB teacher from a secondary school experiencing significant declining enrolment explains how 'school choice' tends to segregate schools on the basis of race and class:

North Toronto, Northern, MacKenzie, Lawrence Park... these are schools whose populations are swelling. And it's coming at the expense of other schools. So schools that are... more mixed racially, economically...those schools are seeing a lot of their diversity disappear because of this white middle-class...I'm generalizing, but this kind of consolidation at these schools... The more racialized the school becomes the less desirable it becomes in the eyes of people who are shopping for good schools. And that includes racialized parents, who evaluate a school based on whether white kids go there. (Toronto Teacher 10: Interviewed Jul. 2015)

Likely as a result of these dynamics, Vaughan Road Academy, a school with a significant black population, had its enrolment decline from 770 in 2006-2007 to 220 in 2016-2017, as more local elementary students attended Forest Hill Collegiate, in a neighbouring affluent and predominantly white area. Parents whose children remained at Vaughan Road Academy believed the school was the victim of racial and class segregation. The TDSB voted to close the latter school at the end of the 2016-2017 school year (Kurek 2016; Francis 2016).

In the context of declining demographics, many 'closed enrolment' secondary schools reach this status by operating specialty programs, chief of which is French Immersion, into which students outside the neighbourhood may enrol¹⁷⁴. According to the detailed demographic statistics maintained by the TDSB on program enrolment, the students of its most prestigious

¹⁷⁴ If students later leave the French Immersion program, they may be required to return to their default neighbourhood school (TDSB 2004).

specialty programs, French Immersion and Gifted tend to be among the most privileged¹⁷⁵. They are much more likely to be in the top income decile of families (23.9 percent and 22.4 percent respectively, with conversely 3.1 percent and 1.8 percent in the lowest decile), who are much more likely to be university educated, and white (55.4 percent and 41.6 percent, by comparison 28.3 percent of all TDSB secondary students are white) (Parekh 2013). The TDSB teacher above explained how his school participated in this context:

Schools no longer have a community, it's now a service provider. Parents can shop around and it's about catering to the customer. But of course the parents and families who most often opt for optional attendance are those who have some mobility...who can drive their kids across the city, or kids for whom even taking the bus twice a day is not a major expense. So it tends to appeal to a certain demographic of family... So in order to keep us alive, we were drawing in kids from outside the catchment area. Middle class... Predominantly white. And these families were interested in the program only insofar as the demographics of the program pretty much kept to that. (Toronto Teacher 10: Interviewed Jul. 2015)

As this teacher implies, specialty programs affect school cultures, and by extension teachers' work, by in effect segregating students with particular characteristics into specialty programs. In practice, this typically means the most academically inclined students, with much lower suspension rates (as a quantifiable means of measuring student behaviour) are skimmed from the top, leaving their peers behind. At a macro scale, this reproduces the spatial segregation seen in New York City's exclusive magnet schools with difficult entrance requirements, but within the same school building.

Vaughan Road Academy attempted to sustain enrolment by offering an International Baccalaureate (IB), which was successful in terms of growing to over a hundred students, but it

¹⁷⁵ Interestingly, two other specialty programs oriented towards academically successful students, Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate, were much more racially diverse, drawing disproportionate numbers of south and east Asian students, whose parents were nearly as likely to be university educated as those attending Gifted and French Immersion programs, but with lower incomes (Parekh 2013: 75, 80-81)

did not stop the regular program's decline in enrolment, which in the school's final year was only slightly larger than the IB program. According to a longtime teacher at the school, in response to parent preferences, the IB program was fully segregated from the rest of the school, with dedicated teachers and a separate set of non-academic elective courses. Working in the IB program can be an intellectually rewarding experience for teachers as its students tend to universally be highly academically committed. Some aspects are more prescribed for teachers than the regular curriculum, as final assignments are determined by the IB program, which oversees this level of evaluation (Toronto Teacher 10: Interviewed Jul. 2015). Another consequence for teachers' professional autonomy would appear to be that as in many of New York's small schools, low enrolment makes it unfeasible to offer a broader range of courses beyond those essential for a high school diploma. However the largest impact on teaching I believe to be the unbalanced nature of classrooms caused by further stratifying the existing system of academic streaming¹⁷⁶ with an additional elite level, whether French Immersion, IB, Gifted or Advanced Placement courses, that tend to be primarily accessed by parents with the highest social capital (Parekh 2013).

Across the city in southwest Scarborough, Birchmount Park Collegiate, a school with a recent reputation for discipline problems, located in a racially and socioeconomically mixed area, added a Gifted program consisting of self-contained classes in most academic subjects in the 2016-2017 school year. It aimed to draw in students who would otherwise attend neighbouring Malvern Collegiate in the predominantly white and affluent Beaches community. However only recruiting 14 students, some of whom would have likely attended the school in any case and

¹⁷⁶ Academic subjects in the Ontario curriculum stream grade 9 and 10 students into academic and applied versions, and in grade 11 and 12, into workplace, college and university-bound courses.

taken academic courses, placed the viability of the program in doubt¹⁷⁷. School choice is a particular concern for the People for Education research and advocacy group. Executive Director Annie Kidder expressed her concern that cumulatively it would undermine public education by creating enclaves of privilege within the system:

There's a real love of alternative schools, French immersion... various ways to stream my perfect, precious child—and I speak as one of them—into a place where they'll be with children like them. That's an inexorable, less visible shift, where you start to make public education... work for those with social capital... But they're just wonderful little bubbles of upper middle-class white people where they teach social justice math. (Annie Kidder, Interviewed Nov. 2015)

The publicity and social weight associated with EQAO test scores is the key easily comparable quantitative variable used to facilitate school choice at the elementary level in Toronto. These scores can also be easily located online by the parents of prospective students for secondary schools. However according to accounts cited earlier, it is likely that pressure to raise EQAO scores has a greater impact on the work of elementary teachers than their secondary peers¹⁷⁸. The pressure described in the previous section by secondary teachers to inflate marks in order to increase the pass rate for courses and thereby the overall school graduation rate, finds its expression in the context of school choice in the more qualitative realm of school reputation. Schools with students from predominantly white and affluent families are considered most highly as de facto being the most academically rigorous. However in practice, at the schools that appear to 'win' under school choice, teachers report that academic integrity and their ability to exercise professional judgement, is continually under challenge from these mobile and status-

¹⁷⁷ Personal notes from conversations with school staff, September 2016.

¹⁷⁸ As the focus of my research is limited to secondary teachers, the effect of standardized testing on elementary schools is only mentioned to provide context.

oriented parents. School choice cannot be considered solely responsible for the rise of a culture in which education is treated as a transactional consumer good, but it and the class and racial segregation which it facilitates appear to bear some role. Meanwhile, elite programs that pull in the highest academic achieving students who are also usually the easiest to teach, with fewer special needs and who face the lowest systemic barriers, leave behind everyone else. The nature of teaching changes in these contexts, but more profoundly, the overall equity of the system is undermined to the detriment of the most vulnerable students.

7.6: Scaling up: The Centralization of Bargaining & the Negotiation of Professional Autonomy

The centralization of labour negotiations for Ontario teachers under the Liberal governments of McGuinty and Wynne, followed the uploading of financing to the Ministry of Education under Conservative Mike Harris described at the start of this chapter, completing the succession of the provincial over the municipal, as the most important scale in education governance. This development had important implications for teachers' professional autonomy when an initial collaborative period between the McGuinty government and the federations ended with a drive for public sector austerity. Under the Wynne government, the new provincial scale of negotiations coincided with the increasingly active Ontario Public School Boards Association, which advocated to increase the managerial power of principals to define teachers' work as a cost saving mechanism for insufficiently funded districts. With the Ministry of Education's now well established policy interventions, provincial bargaining became a venue to press for Ontario-wide concessions in professional autonomy.

Centralized collective bargaining is the dominant trend in Canada for teachers, with Ontario and Alberta the latest provinces to join British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and Quebec¹⁷⁹ with two-tiered¹⁸⁰ district/provincial negotiations structures. The smaller maritime provinces of Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island have completely centralized negotiations for teachers (Sweeney, McWilliams, Hickey 2012: 251). Two tiered negotiation structures typically delegate issues which are most directly determined by funding levels, such as salaries, pensions, benefits and usually class sizes to negotiation between the provincial government and the provincial unions. Other less directly economic issues relating to working conditions are typically left for negotiations between school districts and union locals. The centralization of funding created a strong rationale for Ontario's teachers' unions to scale up negotiations to deal directly with provincial policymakers, while striving to keep other issues, such as the managerial prerogatives of principals to assign non-classroom tasks to teachers, at the local level if strong contract language already existed here. For employers, a major incentive was a perception that school districts could not hold their own against local unions that also counted on the support of their provincial federations. Many of OSSTF's historical gains such as the large salary increases of 1974-1975, were done by 'whipsawing' school boards, winning a precedent setting salary in one district and pressing to have it met or surpassed elsewhere. British Columbia, considered an important influence on the Ontario and Alberta government's subsequent shifts towards centralization, was motivated to do so to counter the highly effective

¹⁷⁹ Quebec has perhaps the most complex structure. Salary and pensions are negotiated at a third level, between a coalition of public sector unions and the provincial government (Sweeney, McWilliams, Hickey 2012: 251).

¹⁸⁰ 'Two tiered' is the term most often used in official governmental and journalistic reports on provincial/local collective bargaining in Ontario. It is not related to its usage elsewhere in labour studies research to refer to collective agreements where new workers are placed on an inferior salary and benefits scale.

coordinated local bargaining of the BC Teachers' Federation (Schucher & Slinn 2012: 20; Rose 2012: 216; Shilton 2012).

This section sets the context with a brief overview of the Harris government's disruption of the existing structures of local collective bargaining. I then look at how during his first two terms from 2003 to 2011, the McGuinty government's political strategy of pursuing labour peace with teachers led to the increasing formalization of two tiered collective bargaining as OSSTF and the other federations agreed to these new processes. Next, I will show how this scaling up of negotiations was transformed in the highly adversarial context of McGuinty and Wynne's push for fiscal austerity from 2012 onwards, which initially centred on education worker compensation rather than aspects of professional autonomy with a direct effect on the classroom. There was little diminishment of this underlying conflict in the 2015-2016 round of collective bargaining, despite the legal formalization of the two-tiered structure in 2014. At this juncture, the government in concert with the Public School Boards Association, tabled significant concessions on teacher professional autonomy, as well as compensation increases below the rate of inflation. Ultimately the former were defeated by the federations, at the cost of the latter. The political approach taken by the provincial government has been the decisive factor throughout the experience of centralizing negotiations in Ontario. These contentious rounds of negotiations have also precipitated debate among OSSTF members over the balancing of union demands relating to compensation versus professional practice. This discussion is significant insofar as it also signifies an opportunity, as it did for activist teachers allying with parents over onerous standardized testing in New York State, to reinforce a broader interest of teacher unionism in matters of the public interest.

The Harris Conservative government's attack on teachers' professional autonomy

In 1997, the Conservative government repealed Bill 100, the legislation governing teacher labour relations since teachers won the right to strike in 1974, replacing it with provisions under Bill 160, which as referenced above, had a multi-faceted adverse effect on the federations. Teachers were placed within the Ontario Labour Relations Act, which was significantly revised to eliminate anti-scab legislation and card check certification for union recognition, the latter not relevant to public teachers who remained statutory members of the federations. Bill 160 removed class size and instructional time from collective bargaining, promptly increasing both (Rose 2012: 208). Reasonable class sizes and sufficient preparation time are critical for the ability of teachers to meaningfully exercise professional judgement. The five federations representing 126 000 teachers launched a two week illegal strike in November 1997, as mentioned in chapter 4. They did not defeat this legislation but did build public awareness of Harris' austerity agenda in regards to education (Gidney 1999). The fight over Bill 160 was emblematic of the frequent strikes and occasional lockouts of teachers in local negotiations in 1998 and 2000, chiefly over the loss of prep time, with a strike rate of 23.8 percent, versus 2.2 percent under Bill 100 from 1974 to 1996 (Rose 2012: 210). The federations were often ordered to end strikes by the labour relations board, but teachers responded by refusing to do extracurriculars. The government partially capitulated in 2001 by redefining instructional activity to begin to restore lost prep time (Rose 2012).

The uploading of education finance combined with the imposition of a rigid funding formula, "gave the government an effective veto over meaningful local bargaining on crucial

monetary and non-monetary issues and took other major issues off the bargaining table altogether.” (Shilton 2012: 222). In the context of an aggressively neoliberal, pro-austerity Ontario government, the “real quarrel was not about the new collective bargaining framework per se. It was about a shift in power within the school system from the local to the provincial level.” (Shilton 2012: 221). Shilton explains further:

the government used its legislative and regulatory authority to circumvent the collective bargaining process, deliberately constraining the flexibility of local parties to negotiate local solutions to the challenges created by the new funding formula. It was an approach calculated to alienate all parties to local bargaining, since it clearly reflected the government’s view that school boards were captive to the teachers’ unions, incapable of asserting the strong management control needed to keep both teachers and tax levels in line. (2012: 232-233)

While undermining local negotiations both by imposing policies that were loathed by teachers and a highly restrictive finance structure which offered no room to manoeuvre for school boards, the Harris government did not attempt to implement any form of formalized central negotiations. This did not prevent the federations from waging political campaigns targeting the government, as it had when Ontario set a ceiling on school district expenditures to combat inflation in the 1970s.

Labour peace and the emergence of two-tiered bargaining under the McGuinty Liberals, 2003-2011

During their campaign and upon taking office, the Liberals stated a desire for a shift from “intense and confrontational government-teacher relations to an approach based on consensus and cooperation.” (Rose 2012: 212). Collective agreements were reached with informal provincial coordination for 2005-2008 which in addition to gains mentioned earlier including the

hiring of more specialist teachers, restored prep time lost under the Harris Conservatives, made voluntary activities voluntary again, and reintroduced negotiated class size limits, gaining overall federation support for Dalton McGuinty's education policies (Leslie Wolfe, Interviewed Sep. 2016; Fullan & Boyle 2014: 71; Rose 2012: 213). The 2008-2009 negotiations for the 2008-2012 contracts involved a "more open and formal approach" (Rose 2012: 213), with a consultation to determine central issues and the participation of Ministry representatives in local negotiations. A twelve percent salary increase over four years provided a strong incentive for OSSTF and the Catholic Teachers to settle, especially in the context of the approaching economic recession. Through these two rounds, the Provincial Discussion Tables (PDT) functioned despite the government not having an official legal mandate to conduct bargaining. The PDTs guaranteed central funding for salary and workload, enabling a decline in class sizes. Local negotiations would subsequently occur within this context, subject to a deadline by the Ministry in order to receive agreed central funding for salary increases, creating a de facto two tier bargaining system (Leslie Wolfe, Interviewed Sep. 2016; Rose 2012: 212; Shilton 2012: 235). This shift was facilitated by the legal assigning of local bargaining rights to provincial teachers' federations.¹⁸¹ According to Rose, the key factors for success in these two rounds for OSSTF were the "Liberals' close ties with teacher unions" (2012: 215), tangible improvements on workload issues from the Harris years in the first round, and real salary gains in the second round at a time of recession and austerity. Teacher salaries rose faster than private sector workers and the average

¹⁸¹ Over 300 local teacher and occasional teacher bargaining units existed in Ontario, with each board having four unless the locals had amalgamated (Shilton 2012: 224, 226).

of other public sector workers from 2004 to 2009 (Rose 2012: 215).¹⁸²

The emergence of two tiered bargaining created new dynamics within OSSTF and the other federations. A critical, recurring issue was the lack of clarity around the defining of central and local issues. Shilton observed that the government could use financial pressure through proposed salary increases to force central negotiations on issues that unions prefer to be local (Shilton 2012: 238). Unions can also disagree internally about the central/local split, depending on whether local leaders hoped below average contract terms could be brought up to a higher provincial average or feared that it would fall to this level. Within OSSTF, the Toronto bargaining unit lobbied for on-call supervision and workload language to remain at the local bargaining table, as the union local believed it had the best contractual language in the province (Leslie Wolfe, Interviewed Sep. 2016). Sweeney, McWilliams and Hickey reported from their interviews with union leaders a tendency for local officers to have more reservations about central bargaining than staff at the provincial level. Through two tiered bargaining, provincial union negotiators became increasingly important within the federations in relation to local elected union executives (Sweeney, McWilliams & Hickey 2012: 255, 259).

Significantly, the Ontario Public School Boards Association (OPSBA) was not an influential organization during the 2005 and 2008 to 2009 negotiating rounds. This favoured

¹⁸² The Liberals could also be punitive, rescinding part of a salary increase for Elementary Teachers, already accepted by the other unions, when they held out in 2009 for parity in prep time with OSSTF (Shilton 2012: 236). Meanwhile, as a precursor to the conflicts driven by school boards interested in increasing management rights and flexibility that would wrack future provincial negotiations, Toronto teachers were the last OSSTF local to settle in 2009, due to the TDSB's struggle to weaken contract language limiting on-call supervisions (Shilton 2012: 237). A side deal with the government, allegedly with the personal intervention of education minister Kathleen Wynne, enabled Toronto OSSTF members to gain the full salary increase despite the late agreement. The use of deadlines by the provincial government to reach local deals including agreed upon salary increases was a power tactic in exerting influence over local bargaining (Sweeney, McWilliams & Hickey 2012: 260). The federations were frequently feuding at this time, as in a battle over representation between OSSTF and ETFO for newly hired early childhood educators and a squabble over dues owed by OSSTF to the Ontario Teachers Federation. This likely diminished solidarity when the Elementary Teachers attempted to buck the trend in 2009 (Shilton 2012: 239).

easier resolutions as despite sharing federation demands for greater school funding, OPSBA was sharply at odds on issues governing teacher working conditions and professional autonomy insofar as they curtailed the management prerogatives of principals. Rose wrote presciently, “Two-tier bargaining has benefited from favourable economic conditions and funding assurances. How sustainable it will be in leaner economic times is uncertain.” (2012: 217)

Austerity, the end of labour peace and the formalization of two-tiered bargaining, 2012-2016

The Liberals shifted from a ‘partnership’ to an increasingly adversarial approach to OSSTF and other education sector unions. The 2008-2012 collective agreements bridged over a global recession, during which the Ontario government engaged in some mild stimulus spending to ameliorate the effects of the downturn. The provincial deficit rose significantly as tax revenue also declined¹⁸³. McGuinty and the leadership of the Liberal Party emerged with a new approach, in which provisioning the education sector was not a priority. OSSTF lagged behind this political realignment. While issuing strong public statements denouncing the political direction of the Liberals, engaging in protests and assisting the New Democratic Party (NDP) in some strategic wins at the expense of the government, other actions suggested provincial and perhaps also the Toronto leadership, held out hope for a high level compromise, and were less than fully committed to struggle. Through this process, the centralization of negotiations to the provincial level continued, while McGuinty’s government flexed its power over education policy in a manner reminiscent of the Harris Conservatives. In the aftermath, a formal two-tiered bargaining structure was created. It was immediately demonstrated that beyond newly defined legal

¹⁸³ Primarily due to the economic downturn, but also because of a decision by the provincial government to reduce the corporate tax rate.

parameters, the decisive factor determining the character of negotiations were the intentions of the employers, the provincial government and the school boards, which continued to press for austerity and concessions. The following account and analysis draws heavily on the author's direct experience as an active member and local leader within OSSTF Toronto during this period.

McGuinty's Liberals won reelection in 2011, one seat short of their earlier majority. In the context of shifts in US politics associated with the so-called 'Tea Party' movement and the election in Toronto of charismatic mayor Rob Ford, the official opposition Conservatives moved further to the right on economic issues in the midst of the recession, using populist conceptions of government waste to accuse public sector workers including teachers of being overpaid. The Liberals responded shortly after their victory by commissioning a high profile bank economist to analyze the province's fiscal situation and provide recommendations on eliminating the deficit by 2017-2018 through reductions in public expenditures. Measures to increase revenue such as raising taxes were explicitly rejected (Ontario 2012a). The report recommended cutting \$2.8 billion by 2018 to K-12 education, the largest ministry after health, by limiting increases in funding to a rate below inflation. The salaries and wages of 294 000 K-12 teachers and education workers, accounting for 76 percent of the provincial education budget, would be the target (Ontario 2012a: 363).

The widely publicized release of the Drummond Report (named for its author) in February 2012 coincided with the start of negotiations by OSSTF and other education unions through the Provincial Discussion Tables. Its proposals to eliminate the new full day kindergarten program and increase class sizes to eliminate thousands of teachers were rejected by the

government¹⁸⁴. The report also suggested that threatened job cuts of thousands of support staff and larger class sizes could be traded for salary concessions by teachers and education workers (Ontario 2012a: 223). The government subsequently demanded salary freezes, furlough days, reductions in paid sick days and elimination of a gratuity by which retiring teachers received a cash bonus for unused sick days¹⁸⁵ (Ontario 2012b: 1; Fullan & Boyle 2014: 85). The 2012 Ontario budget released soon after included a \$500 million cut to education funding by these means. Toronto OSSTF member Caitlin Hewitt-White described the focus which left “intact relatively decent features of the school system, like class size caps, a clever strategy that made use of the public’s perception of teachers as well-off and spoiled.” (2015: 173). The provincial government avoided proposals directly related to classroom practices and professional autonomy. It appeared to be a ploy to convince the public that the conflict was purely monetary, in a political context where fiscal austerity had popular support. Negotiations came to an impasse, despite a full page newspaper advertisement by the provincial leadership of OSSTF that the union was willing to accept a two year wage freeze. While intended to win public support by emphasizing the union’s moderation, the concessionary stance alienated many activist members. It failed to elicit any change in the government’s approach (Personal notes; Hewitt-White 2015: 181). The government reached a concessionary deal with the Catholic Teachers Association (OECTA) in July that closely resembled its opening position (Hewitt-White 2015: 180).

¹⁸⁴ Lay offs of thousands of custodians, school secretaries and educational assistants and the intensification of work for those who remained were subsequently carried out with little media attention or public awareness. Many schools in Toronto were affected (Personal notes, 2013).

¹⁸⁵ The latter benefit had high symbolic value. A year earlier it was the focus of Toronto’s newly elected conservative mayor Rob Ford’s drive for concessions from municipal employees.

As OSSTF and ETFO decried this substandard deal and planned job action as the 2012-2013 school year began, the Liberal government set a precedent for a legislated attack on trade union rights by proposing that the Catholic contract be imposed on the hold out unions. Bill 115, the *Putting Students First Act* passed in September with Conservative support. It required OSSTF and ETFO to reach agreements that were ‘substantively similar’ to the OECTA deal, and set a deadline of December 31, after which contracts would be imposed. The Ontario Labour Relations Act prohibits strikes during the life of a contract. Teacher protests would thereby be effectively curtailed regardless of consent or dissent to the outcome of this imposed structure. Provincial OSSTF negotiators initially tried to work within this constrained framework in an effort to limit losses, but five of seven local bargaining units that reached tentative agreements were voted down by members. OSSTF abandoned any further deals under the circumstances. While ETFO conducted a series of rolling one day district strikes over the fall, OSSTF boycotted non-teaching administrative and extracurricular activities, the latter drawing significant public attention to the conflict. Weekly pickets were also held outside of Liberal provincial parliament offices across Ontario. OSSTF Toronto members at the school level organized leafletting at subway stations. Despite this activity by many members, Hewitt-White critiques a lack of alliance building with parent groups or other unions, noting that these protests seldom attracted outside supporters. Other union activists criticized the apparent lack of coordination between ETFO and OSSTF in the organization of protests. Thousands of Ontario high school students did organize one-day walk outs, including several high schools in Toronto, culminating in a rally at the provincial legislature. They were ostensibly over the lack of extracurriculars, but most had an

overall pro-teacher approach, demanding that the government negotiate fairly (Sweetman 2012; Hewitt-White 2015: 180-183).

Dalton McGuinty resigned amid rising conflict¹⁸⁶ in October 2012, having served nearly nine years as premier. New contracts were imposed on most OSSTF and all ETFO locals in January 2013, at which point Bill 115 was rescinded, having served its purpose. Kathleen Wynne was elected interim premier by the Liberal Party, touted as being to the left of McGuinty and her contenders. As a former education minister, she was considered well placed to resolve the conflicts with teachers. While organizing rallies against the Liberals, the OSSTF Toronto Teachers executive donated a total of \$30 000 to candidates for their party's leadership including Wynne, causing considerable controversy when this was published by Elections Ontario. Many active members expressed their frustration that this was done without their knowledge or consent, and thought the 'realpolitik' it represented smacked of cynicism¹⁸⁷ (Hewitt-White 2015: 185). The incident generated a caustic editorial in the pro-Liberal daily *Toronto Star*, which accused OSSTF Toronto of "playing an old-fashioned political game" by donating to politicians against whom they were simultaneously protesting (Toronto Star 2013). Retiring as OSSTF president in the aftermath of the Bill 115 conflict, Ken Coran shocked many members by running that summer for the Liberals in a London, Ontario provincial by-election. He was defeated by the NDP (Hewitt-White 2015: 182-185).

Wynne publicly acknowledged that Bill 115 was a mistake for having generated considerable conflict and mistrust, but did not act to ameliorate the financial losses it inflicted on

¹⁸⁶ In addition to the conflict with teachers, his government was embroiled in a scandal over the costly cancellation to help win several ridings in the 2011 election, of a plan to build gas-powered electrical generators.

¹⁸⁷ Personal notes from many formal and informal discussions with OSSTF Toronto members on this topic.

teachers¹⁸⁸, holding the austerity line of lowering education expenditures. Her government consulted the education unions for the creation of the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act (2014) which formalized a two-tiered negotiations structure of central (provincial) tables and local tables (Leslie Wolfe, Interviewed Sep. 2016). Its first round from 2015 to 2016 yielded major conflict. In the context of the government's intention to further limit funding, the Ministry of Education tacitly or explicitly encouraged the Ontario Public School Boards Association (OPSBA) to propose significant concessions on professional autonomy which could give districts and school administrators more flexibility in the usage of provincial funding. OPSBA, representing directors, superintendents and principals, was not originally conceived in the two-tiered Collective Bargaining Act as a full party. To the frustration of the federations, it appeared to be delegated this role by the Ministry of Education and the provincial government, aligning its interests against the professional autonomy of teachers.

Negotiating over which issues would be dealt with at central and local tables consumed most of a year before collective bargaining could formally begin (Jones 2016). According to OSSTF President Paul Elliot, this was in large part due to the intervention of OPSBA. Elliot explained how this structure made for a very slow start:

[I]t might have worked if it was just a two tiered process at the provincial level we negotiate directly with the government. But they've set it in such a way that they have the third party which is the school boards. ...two of the parties may agree, but one of the parties may hold up the rest of this or have a veto power over the deal... Really in fact, what we're bargaining is some local issues, and also over the provincial issues. ... We went to an arbitrator, for us it became obvious that this was going to take so long that we actually said was, 'if you agree that this will be a central item, than we'll agree on these two items that you said will be central items'. Our goal was to minimize the central

¹⁸⁸ The Wynne government did engage in limited provincial negotiations with OSSTF and ETFO in spring 2013, improving sick days and partially restoring movement up the pay grid for teachers not at the top of the ten annual steps (Fullan & Boyle 2014: 85).

items, just big ticket items, that's it. But they wanted things like class size, supervision, all kinds of things that vary all over the province. That took far too much time, as opposed to having a defined number of issues that are in regulation or legislation... (Interviewed Sep. 2016)

Elliot explained some of the differences in emphasis between the Ministry and the school boards, blaming the latter for scuttling deals reached with the government:

The government is about policy and initiatives... But for school [boards], it's really local management issues. Class size, supervision, number of on-calls. ... in our estimation, at the central table, if you want to have the school boards there, they should be in an advisory capacity. ... The central table, just the government and ourselves, we talk about money. Then we have local bargaining where we really talk about local issues. (Interviewed Sep. 2016)

Education minister Liz Sandals, previously a long time school trustee and past president of OPSBA, championed the association's issues according to Elliot. She would push for the elimination of class size caps, arguing that with declining enrolment they were leading to program cuts at small schools. Elliot argued this conveniently overlooked the provincial government's power to determine per-pupil funding (Interviewed Sep. 2016). Again suggesting the asymmetrical relationship between the Ministry of Education and school boards, Elliot believed the former did not trust districts to disburse their funds to signature provincial programs, rather than to other areas with budget shortfalls. However a priority for increasing the managerial power of principals in relation to teachers seems to have prevented school boards from otherwise making common cause with the teachers' federations in demanding more funding for education.

From the opening of provincial negotiations in February 2015, OPSBA and the provincial government demanded an aggressive series of concessions from OSSTF and other education unions. Moving beyond Bill 115's imposed salary freezes and back to the Harris era, employer

demands included removing class size limits, eliminating all preparation time for several categories of teachers and significantly reducing it for all others by increasing the ability of principals to assign on-calls and other forms of unscheduled supervision. Striking at the heart of professional autonomy, “[School] Boards would determine the type, frequency and timing of diagnostic assessment tools used by teachers. Boards would establish the mechanism to be used by all teachers to record the results and these would be used to inform teacher practices.” (OSSTF 2015b). OSSTF locals in four school districts struck near the end of the school year, with more planning to walk out before the Ontario Labour Relations Board ruled that the strikes were illegal as they were not ‘local’ strikes but were in fact in response to provincial bargaining issues. The confusing and labour unfriendly nature of two-tiered bargaining was again demonstrated. By the start of the 2015-2016 school year, with OSSTF now threatening a full provincial strike, the Ministry and OPSBA dropped their extensive demands relating to professional autonomy. The union won a year’s hiatus on new Ministry initiatives and contract language recognizing teachers’ professional judgement. Also won were modest salary increases below the rate of inflation.¹⁸⁹

According to OSSTF Toronto vice president Leslie Wolfe, beyond its economic consequences for teachers, an impact of Bill 115 was to “exacerbate what was already a sense of a lack of control over their own professional worlds”, in the context of previous policy layering under McGuinty (Interviewed Sep. 2016). She recognized that many members also felt

¹⁸⁹ Commencing after provincial negotiations concluded, OSSTF Toronto Teachers’ bargaining over workplace issues dragged on for nearly a year. Members boycotted administrative duties but not extracurriculars to avoid alienating parents. Eventually, the TDSB dropped a proposal to eliminate a subsidy which covered the salaries of half of the executive released from classroom duties, and the union won improvements on health and safety (Leslie Wolfe: Interviewed Sep. 2016).

mistrustful of the union, adding to the overall frustration of teachers. One OSSTF Toronto member, who described herself as pro-union and had participated in the protests, looked back on the Bill 115 conflict:

It was so crazy last time with the contracts being imposed. It felt like this shocking breach of democracy, and we, at our school anyway... were ready to do illegal strikes, we were ready to really take strong action, and our union was not on that page at all. And we felt pretty let down last time around. ... So that was really strange to see, when we were all fired up and ready to do whatever we needed to do, and stand up not just for our own contract and salary and what not, but just basic democratic rights. (Toronto Teacher 4: Interviewed Nov. 2014)

An activist member within OSSTF Toronto explained the dynamics of the Bill 115 struggle by a top-down nature of the union which came to rely heavily on connections with politicians during the McGuinty era, while neglecting grassroots forms of exercising political power:

Ken Coran, who had spent many years building solid relationships with the Liberals was, I think, genuinely dumbfounded when the terms [of the imposed contract] were presented to him in 2012. ...he had built relationships with these people and he trusted...it was like he was trying to explain to them, 'don't you understand, we're the good guys.' People were completely unprepared. I think this is something that happens in labour leadership, with our managerial class of union managers. Many of them are in their positions for a long time, they build relationships with these people, they think they can come to count on. Then everybody looks for the electoral fix. To be honest, right now, in terms of negotiations, I don't really see a lot more that our union can be doing that they're not doing. But the big problem is what they haven't been doing for many years, which is really about building community links and community supports. (Toronto Teacher 10: Interviewed Jul. 2015)

As a co-chair and an active member of OSSTF Toronto's Political Action Committee, it is my experience that non-electoral strategies to build political power which require the involvement of large numbers of members, such as systematic outreach to parents or potential community allies, do not figure in the union's core strategies. The official 'labour-community' organization for this purpose, the Campaign for Public Education, has acted as a coordinating body for union leaders

at the TDSB and progressive trustees to issue public statements and advertisements. At the same time, through a range of other member-led committees, OSSTF Toronto supports a range of causes beyond the pecuniary interests of its membership, through donations, advocacy at the TDSB and direct participation¹⁹⁰. However, these efforts are seldom conceived as part of a deliberate strategy of the union for building political power in the context of defending public education. In this way, OSSTF Toronto and the provincial union as a whole, like many unions, engage in ‘social unionism’ if not a ‘social movement’ or ‘social justice’ unionism (Ross 2012; Camfield 2011: 50-52; Fletcher & Gapasin 2008).

Preventing the provincial government from framing labour struggles with teachers as being primarily over compensation issues is critical for OSSTF and the federations if they are to gain popular support in a context of stagnant wages for most working people and financially squeezed public services. During the fight over Bill 115, the unions framed it as an attack on democratic rights, gaining some public support, especially with those already disillusioned with McGuinty’s long reign due to other instances in which the government’s interpretation of law was questionable. Some teachers interviewed (Toronto teachers 3 and 4) expressed a desire that OSSTF be more pro-active on curriculum, pedagogy and other areas more integral to professional practice. The 2015 central agreement was ratified by 78 percent of members and all bargaining units (OSSTF 2015c). In Toronto more member attention was attracted to the below inflation salary increases, coming after two years of salary freezes under Bill 115, than to the victory on professional autonomy.

¹⁹⁰ These include immigrant rights groups, campaigns to raise the minimum wage, a public transit riders’ group and many charities serving children and youth (Personal notes).

Considering the context of education governance after the Harris Conservatives and 13 years under Liberal premiers McGuinty and Wynne, Wolfe observed:

Secondary teachers today in Toronto experience their jobs with a great deal more sense of stress and pressure than when I began teaching in the late 1980s, Pre Harris. I would put that down to the amount of change, the speed with which change is implemented, the lack of inclusion of the front line worker, in this case the teacher, in developing the change. So there's no opportunity for a teacher to... have a sense of control over, or a sense that their professionalism is being recognized or honoured in any way. (Interviewed Sep. 2016)

A clear continuity existed, despite major changes in discourse and the early restoration of funding, from the Harris government to the Liberals, through the inheritance of disciplinary institutions like the College of Teachers and the Education Quality and Accountability Office. The initial centralization of authority to the provincial level under Harris through the transformation of education finance, facilitated far more sophisticated forms of governance under the Liberals which steadily increased the capacity of the Ministry of Education to regulate the professional lives of teachers. For secondary teachers, this chiefly occurred through the premise of steadily increasing graduation rates at all costs. Simultaneously, as with New York City, albeit in a less extreme form, the neoliberalization of education manifested itself in the specific context of the big city. 'School choice' introduced a competitive market for enrolment to the public system. The result was structured along already existing racial and class inequities in Toronto, grounding segregation more strongly in schools, with an adverse affect on students and teachers.

Finally, shifting economic circumstances with the 2008-2009 downturn saw McGuinty change his alliances to the detriment of OSSTF, whose leadership appeared slow to comprehend that their organization was no longer considered an essential partner by the government. At both the provincial and the local level in Toronto, leaders struggled to adapt to the new context, to the

frustration of members, some of whom saw the union as another unresponsive bureaucratic intrusion in their work lives like the district and the Ministry (Toronto Teacher 1: Interviewed Aug. 2014). The supplanting of the initial informal structures for provincial union-government consultations by the formal School Boards Collective Bargaining Act did nothing to improve negotiations in the 2015-2016 round. Rather it demonstrated that the key ingredient, in the context of unions on the defensive, were employers willing to compromise on the roll out of top down policy affecting teachers' professionalism, and willing to ensure that their real compensation was not eroded. Unfortunately, in the context of neoliberalized governance and fiscal austerity, this was not the case. Amid a return to conflict and the ongoing neoliberalization of education among many other sectors in Ontario, an OSSTF Toronto teacher argued that ultimately a deeper rethink of union strategy is needed:

[W]e've got members who say, we should just all walk out, we need to take a hard stance...I actually don't agree with that. We'd be legislated back to work, eventually. We'd blow through our budgets, we would be fined massively, like in BC, for every day that we were out illegally. We couldn't sustain a full walk out... unless you know you've got... a massive social movement behind you. We don't, and we wouldn't, because we haven't done that work to lay the foundation for that. I think it means that we're really bargaining right now from a position of weakness. There's a lot of work on the ground that needs to happen, and I don't think anyone in our leadership know how to do that. I don't think too many people in the labour movement these days know how to do that, because it's all been about... negotiating contracts and enforcing contracts, and that's it. But that ends up keeping us in these silos. That for me is why we're weak. It's not just us, it's right across the labour movement. Unless we can figure out a way to build social movements, I don't know how we're going to exist. (Toronto Teacher 10: Interviewed Jul. 2015)

One way to build trust with parents and a skeptical broader public that teacher job actions are not just about salaries and benefits, and create a deeper role for the union in the work lives of many members, could be to more prominently and articulately champion their professional autonomy.

8. Conclusion

The resistance to attacks on teachers continues in North America. In the 2016 spring election of New York City's United Federation of Teachers (UFT), the Movement of Rank and File Educators (MORE) and their allies won all seven seats reserved for high school teachers on the union's executive board. President Mulgrew and his colleagues were handily reelected, but MORE presidential candidate Jia Lee received over 10 000 votes, doubling the caucus' presidential vote in the last election in 2013. Overall UFT member turnout in the 2016 election rose from 18 percent to 24 percent (MORE 2016). After a year at her school serving as a UFT Chapter Leader, having not received tenure, Jen left teaching and moved to California to enter law school. In the aftermath of the 2016 US presidential election, MORE and other NYC teacher activists have gathered inside and outside of the UFT to strategize on opposing the entry of immigration agents into the city's schools to deport undocumented students. Trump's education secretary, billionaire Betsy DeVos, holds no experience within public education and was a major proponent of private school vouchers in Michigan. There is much speculation about what her agenda will mean for public education in NYC and the nation.

Mexico's Secretary of Public Education (SEP) announced in the fall of 2016, that the standardized teacher exam would now be voluntary, except for those who had failed it last year. If upheld, this is a major victory for the teachers' movement (CNTE). However the CNTE reports that some teachers are still receiving letters stating that they must attend exams scheduled for the 2016-2017 school year. The government is also reportedly not following through on firing teachers who were absent for the exams last year, but it is in the process of firing over 2000

teachers across the country who had more than three unexcused absences in a month, principally those who participated in the strikes at the end of the previous school year¹⁹¹. Twenty-one of these teachers are from Mexico City, the majority are primary teachers of CNTE Section 9 who participated in the strike last June and July. This includes all 11 classroom teachers of the small Leonardo Bravo primary school in central Mexico City, where CNTE leader Francisco Bravo is the school director. He has been threatened with termination. I met with several of these teachers and the director at their school in October 2016. They were continuing their regular classroom duties, despite not being paid since the end of September. The school's parents had mobilized to physically block the entry into the building of replacement teachers sent by the SEP. The SEP repeatedly refused to meet with delegations of parents requesting the reinstatement of the teachers. The teachers whom I talked with were pessimistic about their prospects, noting the difficulties of time consuming legal appeals. The CNTE of Section 9 has been holding fundraisers to help support them. In February 2017, the CNTE delivered over 500 000 signatures on a national petition to the Mexican Senate to repeal the Ley de Servicio Profesional Docente, the government of Enrique Peña Nieto's constitutional changes that mandate teacher testing, and to abolish the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (INEE) which oversees standardized testing (Poy Solano 2017).

After nearly four years, in 2016 the Ontario Superior Court ruled that Bill 115 violated the Canadian Constitutional right to freedom of association, requiring the teachers' federations and the provincial government to negotiate a remedy. The government approached the federations separately, incorporating a proposal that in exchange for salary and benefit increases,

¹⁹¹ Discussions with Professor Maria de la Luz Arriaga Lemus, October 2016, Mexico City.

the central contract be extended by two years, taking it through the 2018 Ontario election. Under a new centrist leader, the Conservatives are projected to defeat Liberal premier Kathleen Wynne. The federation memberships ratified the extensions and a remedy which would partially compensate teachers for delayed pay grid movement. The 2015 results of the OECD's PISA science exam generated some newspaper coverage as Ontario's rankings declined slightly, but did not precipitate considerable public discussion. The issue of 'choice' and the contrast between neighbouring overcrowded and empty schools has gained increased public attention in Toronto, in the context of the city's deepening issues of socioeconomic inequity.

Despite some reversals, the neoliberal education reform project is far from defeated. Analysis of the current situation is still required as we imagine a path forward. The major contribution of this thesis is theorizing and providing evidence of the fundamental role of attacks on the professional autonomy of teachers in the neoliberalization of education. Further, this dissertation has shown the importance of understanding the scales of governance involved in developing, delivering and implementing policy over time and space. Finally, by exploring how teachers and their organizations have resisted and shaped this policy, we are able to imagine a more radical multiscalar geography for teachers.

Centrality of teachers' professional autonomy in the struggle against the neoliberalization of education

The ability of teachers to exercise their professional autonomy in determining how best to meet the unique needs of their students is a crucial issue determining the future of public education in the contemporary context of its neoliberalization. Professional autonomy is the capacity of teachers to interpret the best means by which to teach defined curriculum objectives

according to the unique contingencies of a classroom, based on formal professional training, working experience and collegial exchange. While there are manifold consequences relating to the privatization of education, particularly seen in the rise of charter schools and vouchers in the US, the most decisive battles have occurred over the nature of teachers' work itself.

I have identified five means across the three contemporary case studies to assess the extent that the neoliberalization of education in North America is undermining professional autonomy. The first is a common trend towards the centralization of education governance, away from local school districts and towards the state/provincial or national level. Centralization facilitated the roll out of subsequent policies, as institutions and structures which may have provided resistance, such as elected school boards, parent organizations and local teacher unions found themselves out-scaled in the mismatch of locally based power to centrally made executive decisions. In all contexts here but especially Ontario and Mexico, scaling up also meant a level of government with much more capacity to regulate teachers' work gaining authority over education.

Second, the intense roll out of top down education policy has tended to transform the roles of school administrators, responsible for supervising its front line implementation. This can include 'school autonomy' or 'school-based management' initiatives where principals are given managerial control over elements of school funding and an interest in cutting costs. The relationship between principals and teachers has shifted from its earlier basis in collegiality to become increasingly hierarchical, as the former are now tasked with ensuring their staff are in compliance with the policy of the day. Their success in doing so is now a primary measure of their own effectiveness as a manager. In the process, the capacity of principals to intervene in the

classroom work of teachers as well as redefine the scope of their professional duties has increased.

Of the various policy measures moving through this relationship, various forms of quantitative performance metrics with politically determined thresholds, such as standardized exams and course credit accumulation towards graduation rates, have the greatest impact on professional autonomy. Teachers in all three case studies reported how their freedom to exercise their judgement in how best to interpret curriculum and pedagogy is subordinated to the imperative of showing progress on these metrics. Here though, the degree and form of pressure is uneven depending on school contexts, with teachers of academically struggling students generally the most affected.

The power of these quantitative metrics over teachers' work is particularly insidious when combined with the creation of a competitive 'market' for student enrolment through 'school choice', a significant form in which the neoliberalization of education has specifically unfolded in urban districts in Canada and the US. Staff compete to avoid the closure of their schools due to low enrolment because of a negative reputation from standardized test score results, and/or class and racial stereotypes. This is done through the marketing of specialty programs, with varying results on teacher professional autonomy. Where large schools have been replaced with many smaller schools, a consequence of the smaller faculty has been the narrowing of course offerings to classes subject to standardized exams. Rather than compel all schools to do better as free market advocates theorize, in practice these local systems become increasingly segregated, with the most mobile students, who tend to be the most privileged on the basis of race and class, concentrating in a handful of 'good' schools. This inequity has a strong effect on

teachers' work, but especially on the life opportunities of students left behind by their more privileged peers. At its worst, as in New York City during the era of Mayor Bloomberg and NCLB, rather than receive additional support, struggling schools are stigmatized and reconstituted, with teachers losing permanent status at the discretion of administrators.

Finally, an important factor in the effect of neoliberal policy on professional autonomy has been the responses of teacher unions themselves. In all three case studies, unions whose primary scale for contention with the state had been at the local district level, were confronted by an increasing scaling up to state/provincial, and/or national levels of governance. New York City's United Federation of Teachers found itself vulnerable as it depended on the political lobbying of state and federal officials, as formal collective bargaining rights remained at the municipal level and as the union leadership was reluctant to fully engage in broader community coalitions which were more confrontational. Mexico City teachers affiliated with the CNTE, have participated in the much larger mobilizations led by the movement in the country's southeast. This has given dissident Mexico City teachers more strength than they would ever have resisting national policies on their own, because of the stronger administrative structures of the city's education authorities. The movement remains limited by the continued dominance of the conservative-led SNTE union in much of the country. Collective bargaining for Toronto teachers officially accommodated the uploading of governance to the provincial level with the institution of two-tier negotiations. However, they also face a much higher degree of unity from districts and administrator associations in the advancement of policies against teacher autonomy.

In all circumstances, teachers' unions grapple with perennial issues of balancing workplace issues relating to autonomy and workload, which offer more immediate bases for

building alliances with parents and community groups, and compensation, especially amid widespread fiscal austerity. In contexts where the professionalism of teachers is consistently undermined, unions are challenged to avoid being seen as another overbearing and unintelligible institution, and instead fight for greater democracy in the workplace. Part of this struggle emerges from the changed composition of many education unions, particularly in Canada and the US. From their roots representing teachers, the UFT and OSSTF have grown to embrace the breadth of education workers from para professionals to clerical staff. In the interests of building power in relation to their employer, this is a positive step. Maclevey (2016) and others have argued for sector-wide unions uniting workers across job classes and with the most and the least bargaining clout. However professional autonomy in the classroom is no longer a unifying issue relevant to the entire membership. While maintaining its sectoral scope, perhaps OSSTF could learn from the Alberta Teachers Association. It has developed a relatively higher provincial prominence on issues related to pedagogy and teacher practice, in part by being an important centre for producing and diffusing education research (Annie Kidder, Interviewed: Nov. 2015). The retention of administrators in Alberta's union likely helped sustain this as a shared priority. Teachers' unions must become the primary, popularly recognized authority on what constitutes good teaching, and should gain this status by devoting considerable effort to obtaining a deep participation of its membership. The alternative is for advocates of neoliberal education policy or external disciplinary agencies like the Ontario College of Teachers successfully making this claim. Teachers' unions should make professional autonomy, including the ability of teachers to interpret curriculum, devise appropriate pedagogy for their students, and limit standardized evaluation and testing, integral issues in collective bargaining, potentially subject to strike action.

Renewing the role of unions in developing teacher professionalism is not without significant pitfalls. Prior to the upsurge of militancy in the 1960s and 1970s, teachers' federations in Canada and the National Education Association in the US defined themselves as professional organizations, which in their contexts resulted in a lack of capacity or willingness to assume the role of a labour union and confront their employers. While leading in the devising of curriculum and pedagogy, they shunned 'unprofessional' activities like strikes or political advocacy to challenge school districts and governments. Teachers' salaries and working conditions languished. It is easy to imagine that transported to the contemporary context, such organizations would have struggled to mount a resistance to privatization and the undermining of autonomy. As mentioned in section 2.6, in the 1990s many US and Mexican union leaders responded to a popularly perceived crisis in education and calls for standardized testing, 'school choice' and more prescribed curriculum by adopting these proposals in the belief that doing so would renew the professional authority of their organizations and blunt anti-union attacks. As seen in chapters 5 and 6 in New York and Mexico, given the broader neoliberal context in which these policies were being developed, their approach was unsuccessful in protecting the integrity of the profession, and instead contributed to the undermining of working conditions and the capacity of the union to engage in contentious politics.

Nevertheless, it's a political dead end to dismiss the importance of unions becoming authorities on teacher professionalism as a distraction from militancy on conventional collective bargaining issues. This means losing a powerful basis for engaging many members through their devotion and concern for the craft of teaching. It is also the most effective way to build a counter-hegemonic position to that of government authorities and neoliberal 'experts' which will

have credibility with parents and the broader public. In the contemporary context, state authorities have demonstrated an increased willingness to intervene against teachers' strikes, through legislation in Canada and the US, and with repression in Mexico. In all three countries, teachers have most successfully defended themselves when they have won the battle of public opinion, creating a heavy political penalty for governments. As a caring profession, K-12 teachers must be able to demonstrate how their expertise serves their students better than the prescriptions of neoliberal policy advocates.

If teachers' unions develop comprehensive and politically significant positions on professional practice, a thorny question emerges on how they should respond when members fail to meet these standards. The conduct of doctors and lawyers is governed by their professional associations, but teachers do not have a similar degree of freedom to determine their conditions of employment. They are salaried, skilled workers subject to the authority of their supervisors. Teachers also have a more complex relationship with the public. Demands by parents and broader communities for a voice in teacher practice emerges from both their fundamental role in child development, and the broader political significance of schools as sites for the reproduction of ideology. As discussed in chapter 2, these claims pose limits to teachers' professional autonomy.

If teachers' work is deskilled, debased, disempowered and professional autonomy is lost, we will see the potential extent of the neoliberalization of education. If the growing number of cut rate, for-profit charter chains in the US are an example, for the publicly funded schools of the working class, it will consist of the replacement of professional educators with non-union technicians responsible for administering an entirely prescribed curriculum of daily lesson plans

with no time or space for pedagogical experimentation. Aside from marching students through preparation for standardized exams and online work modules, their other major task will be maintaining discipline.

Comparing policy trends on professional autonomy and the scaling up of education governance

Policy trends relating to pedagogy, evaluation and curriculum appear to be going in opposite directions in Ontario, versus New York State and Mexico. In the former, progressive pedagogical concepts of assessment and evaluation over standardized testing continue to be ascendant within the policymaking establishment represented by OISE academics, the Ministry of Education and the TDSB. With scores appearing to have stabilized at a high level, less attention is paid to the EQAO. Despite the many layers of provincial education policy, teachers in Toronto, Ontario continue to enjoy substantial professional autonomy. Though as in New York and Mexico, it is often subject to the micro-dynamics of power at the school level, especially defined by the balance of relations between teachers and administrators. It would appear to take a radical shift in political direction to disrupt this status quo.

However even in New York State, a continental epicentre for neoliberal education policy, the peak of standardized testing mania and its use to discipline and regiment teachers and their work, appeared to have been in the fall of 2015. Given the shift in political winds, in great part due to the parent-led Opt Out movement, Governor Cuomo has since moved on to other issues. The formal rescinding of No Child Left Behind in December 2015 by the US Congress, appeared to mark the end of an era of ambitious federal intervention into K-12 education policy, which

under Bush and Obama was profoundly neoliberal. The experience in Mexico shows the repeated failure for myriad reasons, of top down federal education policies such as the ACE, the ENLACE exam, and the Ley de Servicio Profesional Docente, that dismiss the concerns of teachers. The work of key policy advocates like Michael Fullan (2016), suggests that the dominant scale of education governance reform will return to the state or district level. Despite these setbacks, with the continued political dominance of neoliberalism across North America and far beyond, the potential lucrateness of privatized schools, and the general weakness of the labour movement and of alternative political visions, we can expect to see a continued push for the neoliberalization of education for the foreseeable future.

Described throughout this dissertation, an important area of convergence for all three case studies is the general scaling up of labour negotiations, in response to the parallel shift in education governance. To varying degrees in all three cases, it appeared that the strongest scalar advantage was afforded to teachers at the local district level. Teachers' unions are trying to reconsolidate themselves at higher scales, but face much stronger government authorities at the state/provincial or national level than locally. Unlike New York, Ontario teachers are weakened by being divided into four federations that have lacked unity at critical junctures. They also face an adversarial Principal's Council and Public School Boards Association. In New York State, these authorities have split on issues of education finance, standardized testing and teachers' evaluations to align with teachers (Hagopian 2014b). In Ontario, the priorities of these bodies conflict with teachers' professional autonomy, and hence they have aligned themselves with the provincial government. In Mexico, the context is wholly different. On the one hand, the national leadership and many state executives of the official teachers' union (SNTE) gives its unqualified

support for the federal government's education policy, regardless of its impact on its members. While drawing the sympathies of hundreds of thousands of teachers nationally, the capacity of the teachers' movement (CNTE) for sustained collective action remains geographically confined in the south. On the other hand, despite considerable effort by the SEP, the reliability of many school directors throughout the country remains in doubt for carrying out neoliberal reforms affecting teachers' work such as the standardized evaluations. Mexico City school authorities are unusual for having strong administrative and disciplinary capacities. As a result, one of the greatest difficulties faced by neoliberal education reform in Mexico has been the lack of reliable agents for enforcement at the school level. Conflict in education, among other areas, defined most of Enrique Peña Nieto's presidency, contributing to his record low approval ratings.

A multiscale geography of teachers' professional autonomy

The past two decades have seen a significant growth in international connections at both top and grassroots levels between teachers' unions and movements across North America. Much of this can be attributed to an increasing awareness of the similarities of struggles faced by teachers across jurisdictions and borders. Unlike other groups of workers in the context of globalization, teachers do not share the same employers (this could change if we see the rise of multinational private school chains) and we do not see forms of geographical competition for employment and investment in the same manner of other sectors such as manufacturing. However, among union leaders and activists, local exceptionalism and parochialism is giving way to an understanding that there are dominant forms of neoliberal education governance which share strong similarities from place to place. As a result, the impetus for solidarity has grown

from a moral imperative to support workers in struggle, to recognizing the usefulness of sharing strategies for confronting similar policies whether of high stakes standardized exams or ‘school choice’. As teachers struggle for professional autonomy, a geographically informed multiscalar strategy needs to be developed which is not reduced to ‘scaling up’ or ‘localizing’ actions. To have a greater impact on the work lives of teachers, the understandings involved ultimately need to be rooted in the classroom experience.

Since the successful strike of the revitalized Chicago Teachers’ Union in 2012, its leaders and organizers have been hosted by Toronto’s teachers’ unions and groups at least five times to share the lessons behind their victories. Toronto has not experienced the expansion of charter schools and standardized testing like Chicago over the past decade, pushed by neoliberal governments more extreme than have been seen in Ontario. Yet hundreds of Toronto teachers have been enthusiastic to learn about the transformations that occurred within the Chicago union to enable it to score victories and build strong political alliances with parent and community groups, recognizing the applicabilities to their own context. Without neglecting the significance of geographical context in determining distinct strategies, teachers in Toronto and elsewhere have benefited from this policy mobility from below. The biennial Labour Notes and Trinational Coalition in Defence of Public Education conferences have increased in importance since the 2000s as physical gathering points, building long term relationships based on familiarity with other’s struggles and a shared analysis of common issues. Internet communication between conferences has opened up between grassroots groups of teachers across great distances as never before. Practical forms of solidarity remain the familiar forms of demonstrations at embassies and consulates, letters, morale building visits of guests to rallies, and donations. The new

element of transnational teacher unionism is how in the spirit of education, it precipitates radical learning communities¹⁹², through the strategic sharing of experiences in relation to similar issues relating to confronting neoliberal reform. Such radical learning communities could gather ideal conceptions of teachers' professional autonomy by unions and movement activists, the governing discourse from education authorities, and qualitative assessments of the actual status of professional autonomy across jurisdictions. This research could then be used both to inform collective bargaining by individual unions with their employers, and as a means to intervene in public debate on education policy.

Struggle against multilateral neoliberal education institutions like the OECD's PISA exam, subject to a call for protest by the Trinational Coalition in Defence of Education, are unlikely to galvanize more than symbolic activities by teachers' unions in the intermediate term. The local, provincial and national state still has primacy in the education sector, leaving labour struggles highly bound by place.¹⁹³ The key strategic political question for teachers is still how to deal with the state. Historically, North American teachers' unions have been among the most active participants within organized labour in electoral politics. An exception has been the CNTE which has depended politically on its sustained capacity for disruptive protest while avoiding electoral engagement, fearing co-option and a loss of autonomy. In the context of relatively open electoral systems as in Canada, union political strategies could involve forming longterm, meaningful alliances with local parent and community groups that could then evolve organically

¹⁹² To adapt the term, 'Professional Learning Communities', which following Michael Fullan and others, is used by jurisdictions like Ontario to mean meetings among teachers where plans are made to address specific school-level issues, and subsequent progress is assessed.

¹⁹³ The importance of the local scale is further exemplified when teachers broaden their targets to protest corporate actors with significant political influence, as the CNTE, the Chicago Teachers Union and others have done.

into electoral coalitions to support progressive politicians who subscribe to the movement's democratically determined priorities. The 'short cut' of union leaders simply donating large sums of money to influence election campaigns has generated cynicism in the absence of member involvement. Cash donations have limited effectiveness in light of intensifying counter pressures to neoliberalize education, without grassroots union participation and substantive efforts to shape the policies of political parties and candidates.

Despite the prominence of multilateral institutions like the OECD and the World Bank in advocating publicly and privately for neoliberal education policies, particularly in Mexico, in the North American context it is still government officials and politicians who make the decisions. Shifting the direction of education governance is not simply a matter of replacing the people who are feeding ideas to policymakers and searching for new 'good ideas'. It is the structures of governance and the interests which policymakers serve that must be changed, if we are to have a more democratic and socially just public education system that is protected from privatization. This is a profoundly political struggle rooted in every place-bound jurisdiction in North America.

The contradiction of the scaling up of negotiations is that it could become more distant and abstract from the experience of members, removed by further layers of representation from active participation in the absence of job actions and strikes. Likewise, in part due to sustained top down policy from state authorities, the day to day work of leaders and staff members of teachers' unions revolves to a considerable extent around interlocution with these senior officials, or interpreting their edicts. While necessary, this work considerably reduces the opportunity for union officers to work directly with groups of members. In this environment, the markings of a union leader are fluency in a technocratic form of policy and quasi-judicial knowledge. A

technocratic union becomes autocratic when these specific forms of expertise become unchallengeable by rank and file members, leading to their apathy and demobilization.

The institutional health of a local teachers' union remains the cumulative of its presence at school sites, in the degree to which a union culture prevails among its members. The retention and sustained development of worksite stewards recognized as leaders by their peers is critical. Job expertise is strongly associated with workplace leaders recognized by their peers, with or without formal titles. School-site union leaders are most likely to hold the respect of their colleagues, enabling them to make calls for solidarity, if they are considered to be good teachers. Good teachers are defined by their peers as well as their institutions, in large part by their effectiveness in exercising the full breadth of their professional autonomy, through their pedagogy, instruction and social support for students. A greater emphasis by teachers' unions on analyzing and advocating the elements of good teaching could bring the spatial centre of gravity within the union back to the school site and the classroom. The technical skills of lawyers, negotiators and grievance officers are essential so long as employment within K-12 education remain complexly regulated, but the time and energy this demands of leaders and staff comes with the corollary effect that teachers' unions lack skilled member organizers. Professional autonomy and practice offer a substantive basis to engage members that is much more meaningful to their working lives than charity fundraisers. Were a union to research and debate professional practice with an approach that drew on the workplace knowledge of a significant number of its own members, rather than merely hiring outside experts to draft a position, this could make unions more substantively participatory, and thereby more democratic.

On a professional development day during which schools are closed at the Toronto District School Board, OSSTF offers over two dozen workshops, most developed by teachers for their peers. These sessions are among the most popular, in large part because their colleagues are considered best able to cater to the realities of schools and classrooms. They are one of the principal means by which the CNTE in Mexico organizes teachers outside of protests. Unions survey their membership on their priorities for salary and working conditions before entering negotiations. More could be done to train school-site union leaders to canvass the perspectives of their peers on contemporary curricular and pedagogical issues. Doing so could shift power dynamics within schools. With a collective position, teachers would be better able to curb the tendency towards the concentration of managerial power in principals and school directors, and challenge policies that don't work well in their classrooms. At a higher scale, unions with positions on teacher practice developed through a bottom-up process will have a stronger mandate to negotiate, knowing that their members have been deeply engaged in their development. Approaches like these could form part of a multiscale strategy for defending and supporting teachers' professional autonomy.

Directions for future research

The cities I chose as my case studies had in common important histories of teacher unionism and labour activism generally, but they have not been known recently as focal points of struggle or dynamic opposition to contemporary neoliberal education policy. Part of my reason for choosing these cities is that with such a status they have attracted less recent academic attention from scholars like myself who are interested in workers' and teachers' agency. To

further probe teacher agency, more research is needed in recent case study sites with self-declared radical leadership and higher profile militancy. The experience of the Chicago Teachers Union since the rise of the Caucus of Rank and File Educators has been well assessed academically (Brogan 2013, 2014; Alter 2013) and popularly (Bradbury, Brenner et al 2014; McAlevey 2016). Few studies have been made of how the United Teachers of Los Angeles, the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, or (in English) the teachers' movement of Oaxaca and Chiapas, have responded to threats to the professional autonomy of their members. Relatedly, we need more research on how teachers' union leaders and activists conceptualize professional autonomy, and how they grapple with the tensions between a focus on workplace-related issues and on compensation issues in union strategy.

Another geographical approach would be to eschew global cities and see how the work of teachers and their unions have been affected and how they have responded in small cities or rural areas. To draw further lessons on the agency of organized labour and the significance of political context, one could also study the status of professional autonomy in 'right to work' regions of the US or in non-union charter schools. Research could be done on neoliberal policy mobility and professional autonomy using a different regional context, such as Europe or Latin America.

More research is also needed that focuses on how professional autonomy intersects with working class communities, and issues of race where teachers are predominantly of a different ethnicity than their students. Considering the infamous racially tinged conflict between unionism and professional autonomy versus black 'community control' movements in 1968 New York, to what extent do these tensions still exist? Does professional autonomy also empower working class parents, or is it a manifestation of the teacher's middle class authority? At the classroom

scale, what does a loss of professional autonomy look like for teaching practices? How does it affect pedagogy, the interpretation of curriculum and classroom management? What do high school students think? How can professional autonomy be conceived in a way that rather than isolating teachers and potentially creating conflicts with the communities they serve, actually gives teachers intellectual freedom and control of their labour process, while democratizing schools by giving a real voice to parents and students? Put another way, what are the justifiable boundaries of power between the priorities of a democratic state, teachers' professional autonomy and the will of a local community?

Significant work is being done on how top-down policy is affecting principal's work, (in Ontario: Pinto 2015; Vibert 2009; Winton & Pollock 2016), but more could be done through case studies across state jurisdictions and with a more international analysis of neoliberal policy mobility. An analysis of the attack on professional autonomy in the context of the neoliberalization of public services and this methodology of qualitative research on how policy has affected workers, could also be applied to other sectors. A particularly strong parallel could be found with nurses, another feminized professionally trained 'middle class' labour force subject to significant institutional and state regulation. The place-contextualized study of work, the role of agency and how it is affected by highly mobile neoliberal policy, hold many possibilities for future research. In general, there is much more that can be done to systematize comparative studies of teachers' professional autonomy.

Final words

This dissertation has strived to derive its contextual analysis of why teachers and their organizations have responded in diverse ways to neoliberal reforms, from balancing an assessment of structural factors and agency. The differences of history and politics between Canada and the US, and even more between them and Mexico, have been described here. I hope I have also convincingly explained the commonalities of experience in the transformations of work lives of the teachers of New York City, Mexico City and Toronto. At the outset of this dissertation, I situated myself in relation to my research subject, as a teacher and a union activist, with a personal role in some of the international solidarity initiatives described here. My principal method of research, interviews with educators on how their work has been affected by various policies, comes out of my belief in the importance of individual and collective worker experiences in shaping their social worlds. Teachers in various contexts and circumstances have demonstrated considerable agency in challenging the roll out of top down policy that they considered to be harmful to their craft. While they have experienced many set backs, teachers have shown that the political space for the implementation of education policy remains far from empty, and that policy makers dismiss the power of education workers at their own peril.

Bibliography

- Aboites, Hugo (2012). *La Medida de una Nación: Los primeros años de la evaluación en México*. Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana.
- Aboites, Hugo (2015). "The expected crop: social insurgency and new alternatives for education in México," *Critical Education*. 6 (2): 1-8.
- Aggarwal, Ujju, Edwin Mayorga and Donna Nevel (2012). "Slow Violence and Neoliberal Education Reform: Reflections on a School Closure," *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*. 18 (2): 156-164.
- Alerta Chiapas (2016). "'Si estamos pensando en los tres días, ya nos jodimos,' : CNTE," *Alerta Chiapas*. May 19. www.alertachiapas.com . [Accessed May 19, 2016].
- Alter, Tom (2013). "'It Felt Like Community': Social Movement Unionism and the Chicago Teachers Union Strike of 2012," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*. 10 (3): 11-25.
- American Centre for School Choice (2015). "Joseph P. Viteritti," *American Centre for School Choice*. www.amcsc.org [Accessed July 23, 2015].
- Antush, John C (2014). "Labor and 'Ed Deform'," *Monthly Review*. www.monthlyreview.org [Accessed July 25, 2015].
- Aristegui Noticias (2014). "EPN va contra estados que se saltaron la reforma educativa," *Aristegui Noticias*. www.aristeginoticias.com . October 15. [Accessed July 17, 2016].
- Arriaga, Maria de la Luz (2013). *Propuesta empresarial para la mala medición y el despojo de los derechos laborales*. Mexico City: Trinacional Coalición en Defensa de la Educación Pública.
- Arriaga, Maria de la Luz (2008). "In Mexico, to Defend Education as a Social Right We Must Fight for Union Democracy," 221-226 in *The Global Assault on Teaching, Teachers, and their Unions*. Eds. Mary Compton & Lois Weiner. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Babbie, Earl & Lucia Benaquisto (2002). *Fundamentals of Social Research*. Toronto: Thomson Canada.
- Bailey, Christopher (2015). "Neoliberal standardization and its discontents: an interview with Diane Ravitch," 327-331 in *Alternate Routes 2015: Neoliberalism and the Degradation of Education*. Eds. Carlo Fanelli & Bryan Evans. Toronto: Alternate Routes.

- Bakeman, Jessica (2015). "An Outline of Education Reform Proposals in Budget," *Capital New York*. March 31. www.capitalnewyork.com [Accessed April 1, 2015].
- Ball, Stephen J., and Carolina Junemann (2012). *Networks, New Governance and Education*. Chicago: Policy Press.
- Ballou, Dale (2000). "Contractual Constraints on School Management: Principals' Perspectives on the Teacher Contract," 89-116 in *City Schools: Lessons from New York*. Ed. Joseph P. Viteritti & Diane Ravitch. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Barbanel, Josh. "Cortines, Citing Litany of Failure, Plans to Close 2 Big High Schools," *New York Times*. November 12, 1993. B2
- Barrett, Brian (2009). "No Child Left Behind and the assault on teachers' professional practices and identities," *Teaching and Teacher Education*. 25. 1018-1025.
- Basu, Ranu (2009). "Phronesis Through GIS: Exploring Political Spaces of Education," *The Professional Geographer*. 61 (4): 481-492.
- Basu, Ranu (2004). "The rationalization of neoliberalism in Ontario's public education system, 1995-2000," *Geoforum*. 35 (5): 621-634.
- Basu, Ranu (2004b). "Geosurveillance Through the Mapping of Test Results: An Ethical Dilemma or Public Policy Solution," *ACME*. 3 (2): 87-111.
- Becerril, Andrea (2016). "Persecución a maestros basta para revisar la reforma: Romero Hicks," *La Jornada*. July 17. www.jornada.unam.mx [Accessed July 17, 2016].
- Bellinghausen, Hermann (2016). "Apoyo a maestros de Chiapas deviene en asamblea popular permanente," *La Jornada*. July 13. www.jornada.unam.mx [Accessed July 13, 2016].
- Bensusan, Graciela & Kevin J. Middlebrook (2013). *Sindicatos y Política en México: cambios, continuidades y contradicciones*. Mexico City: FLACSO Mexico.
- Berg, Lawrence & Juliana Mansvelt (2004). "Writing In, Speaking Out: Communicating Qualitative Research Findings," 161-179 in *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*. Ed. Iain Hay. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bergene, Ann, Sylvi Endresen & Hege Knutsen (2010). "Re-engaging with Agency in Labour Geography," 3-14 in *Missing Links in Labour Geography*. Eds. Ann Bergene, et al. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing.

- Bhaskar, Roy & Andrew Collier (1998). "Introduction: Explanatory Critiques," 385-394 in *Critical Realism: Essential Readings*. London: Routledge.
- Bocking, Paul (2015). "Why Do Governments Adopt Neoliberal Education Policies? Critical Theory on Policy Movement in the Context of Contemporary Reform in Mexico," *Alternate Routes*. 74-100.
- Bocking, Paul (2015b). "Teachers and parents sustain the struggle for Mexico's missing Ayotzinapa students," *Waging Nonviolence*. March 16. www.wagingnonviolence.org [Accessed Sep. 26, 2016].
- Bracho, Teresa (2009). *Innovación en la Política Educativa: Escuelas de Calidad*. Mexico City: FLACSO Mexico.
- Bradbury, Alexandra, Mark Brenner, et al (2014). *How to Jump-Start Your Union: Lessons From the Chicago Teachers*. Detroit: Labor Notes.
- Bragg, Chris (2014). "Groups spending heavily to push their education agenda use loopholes to keep donors anonymous," *Albany Times-Union*. www.timesunion.com [Accessed July 25, 2015].
- Brambila, Aurora Loyo (2008). "Schooling in Mexico," 203-228 in *Going to School in Latin America*. Eds. Silvina Gvirtz & Jason Beech. London: Greenwood Press.
- Brecher, Jeremy (1997). *Strike!* Cambridge, MA: South End Press.
- Brenner, Neil, Jamie Peck and Nik Theodore (2010). "Variegated neoliberalization: geographies, modalities, pathways," *Global Networks*. 10 (2): 182-222.
- Briseño, Héctor (2015). "Suspensión parcial de la prueba docente en Acapulco," *La Jornada*. December 3. www.jornada.unam.mx [Accessed December 3, 2015].
- Brody, Leslie (2015). "New Evaluation Rules Set for New York Teachers," *Wall Street Journal*. June 15. www.wsj.com [Accessed June 16, 2015].
- Brogan, Peter (2013). "Education in global Chicago and the remaking of contemporary capitalism," *The Canadian Geographer*. 57 (3): 303-310.
- Brogan, Peter (2014). "Getting to the CORE of the Chicago Teachers' Union Transformation," *Studies in Social Justice*. 8 (2): 145-164.
- Bruns, Barbara & Javier Luque et al (2014). *Great Teachers: How to Raise Student Learning in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

- Brysch, Carmen (2014). *Status of Geography Education in the United States*. Washington, DC: National Geographic Society.
- Buras, Kristen (2013). “‘We’re not going nowhere’: race, urban space, and the struggle for King Elementary School in New Orleans,” *Critical Studies in Education*. 54 (1): 19-32.
- Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016). *Union Members 2015*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- Caballero, Arquimedes & Salvador Medrano (1982). “El segundo periodo de Torres Bodet: 1958-1964,” 360-402 in *Historia de la Educación Pública en México*. Ed. Fernando Solana, et al. Mexico City: Secretaria de la Educación Publica.
- Camfield, David (2011). *Canadian Labour in Crisis: Reinventing the Workers’ Movement*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.
- Canadian Press (2014). “Liz Sandals calls in outside expert to review TDSB,” *CBC*. November 25. www.cbc.ca [Accessed January 2, 2015].
- Cano, Arturo (2015). “Repudian la prueba maestros de Oaxaca,” *La Jornada*. November 29. www.jornada.unam.mx [Accessed Nov. 29, 2015].
- Carlos Miranda, Juan (2016). “CCE pide salida ‘justa’, sin violar la ley, para el conflicto magisterial,” *La Jornada*. August 8. www.jornada.unam.mx [Accessed Aug. 8, 2016].
- Carnoy, Martin (1999). *Globalization and Educational Reform: What Planners Need to Know*. Paris: UNESCO and the IIEP.
- Castree, Noel (2007). “Labour geography: a work in progress,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. 31 (4) 853-862.
- Cervantes Pérez, Felipe de Jesús (2012). “El llamado CEND-SNTE. Un análisis crítico,” *Movimiento Liberación Nacional*. www.mln.org.mx [Accessed Nov 29, 2015].
- Coe, Neil & David Jordhus-Lier (2010). “Re-embedding the Agency of Labour,” 29-42 in *Missing Links in Labour Geography*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing.
- Collier, Andrew (1998). “Explanation and Emancipation,” 444-472 in *Critical Realism: Essential Readings*. London: Routledge.
- Conniff, Ruth (2014) “The Con Artistry of Charter Schools,” *In These Times*. www.inthesetimes.com [Accessed Aug. 20, 2014].

- Cook, Maria Lorena (1996). *Organizing dissent: unions, the state, and the democratic teachers' movement in Mexico*. University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Cosío, Arturo Gonzalez (1982). "Los Años Recientes. 1964-1976," 403-425 in *Historia de la educación pública en México*. Eds. Fernando Solana et al. Mexico City: Secretaria de la Educación Publica.
- Creswell, John (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cuban, Larry (2009). *Hugging the Middle: How Teachers Teach in an Era of Testing and Accountability*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Cuban, Larry (2013). *Inside the Black Box of Classroom Practice: Change Without Reform in American Education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Curiel Méndez, Martha Eugenia (1982). "La Educación Normal," 426-462 in *Historia de la educación pública en México*. Eds. Fernando Solana et al. Mexico City: Secretaria de la Educación Publica.
- Dale, Roger (2000). "Globalization and Education: Demonstrating a 'Common World Educational Culture', or Locating a 'Globally Structured Educational Agenda'?" *Educational Theory*. 50 (4): 427-448.
- Darville, Sarah and Geoff Decker (2015). "City's Incoming Teach for America class hits five-year low," *Chalkbeat New York*. <http://ny.chalkbeat.org> [Accessed August 19, 2015]
- Darville, Sarah (2014)a. "As Recruitment Dips, TFA Leader Says New York Training Site to Close," *Chalkbeat New York*. <http://ny.chalkbeat.org> [Accessed August 19, 2015]
- Darville, Sarah (2014)b. "Principals applaud Fariña, de Blasio as leaders present a "tone shift,"" *Chalkbeat New York*. <http://ny.chalkbeat.org> [Accessed January 31, 2014]
- Das, Raju J (2012). "From Labor Geography to Class Geography: Reasserting the Marxist Theory of Class," *Human Geography*. 5 (1): 19-35.
- Decker, Geoff (2015). "Why is there no Teacher Shortage in New York City?" *Chalkbeat New York*. <http://ny.chalkbeat.org> [Accessed October 7, 2015]
- De Jesus, Anthony (2012). "Authentic Caring and Community Driven School Reform," 63-78 in *Critical Small Schools: Beyond Privatization in New York City Urban Educational Reform*. New York: Information Age Publishing.

- Edelman, Susan (2015). "Principal doesn't want teachers sitting -so she threw out all their desks," *New York Post*. www.nypost.com October 18, 2015 [Accessed November 9, 2015].
- Fairris, David & Edward Levine (2004). "Declining union density in Mexico, 1984-2000," *Monthly Labor Review*. September.
- Feldman, Jay and Anne O'Dwyer (2012). "A Close Look at Small School Creation: Lessons Learned from the First Years of a Critical Small School," 41-62 in *Critical Small Schools: Beyond Privatization in New York City Urban Educational Reform*. New York: Information Age Publishing.
- Fine, Michelle (2012). "Foreword: Critical Small Schools -Windows on Educational Justice in a Neoliberal Blizzard," ix-xvii in *Critical Small Schools: Beyond Privatization in New York City Urban Educational Reform*. New York: Information Age Publishing.
- Finn Jr, Chester & Michael Petrilli (2013). "The Failures of US Education Governance Today," in Eds. Paul Manna & Patrick McGuinn, *Education governance for the twenty-first century: overcoming the structural barriers to school reform*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
- Fletcher, Bill & Fernando Gapasin (2008). *Solidarity Divided*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Foley, Eileen et al (2008). *Evaluation of New Century High Schools: Profile of an Initiative to Create and Sustain Small, Successful High Schools*. New York: New Visions for Public Schools.
- Forbes, Dean (2004). "Reading Texts and Writing Geography," 122-143 in *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*. Ed. Iain Hay. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Foucault, Michel (2008). *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures At the Collège De France, 1978-79*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Foweraker, Joe (1993). *Popular Mobilization in Mexico: The Teachers' Movement, 1977-87*. Cambridge [England] ; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press.
- Francis, Angelyn (2016). "TDSB Optional Attendance: Drake's High School May Close, Revealing Ugly Truth in Toronto," *The Huffington Post*. December 5. www.huffingtonpost.com [Accessed December 9, 2016].

- Freeman, Joshua (2000). *Working-class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II*. New York: New Press.
- Fullan, Michael (2016). *The New Meaning of Educational Change*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Fullan, Michael and Alan Doyle (2014). *Big City School Reforms: Lessons from New York, Toronto, and London*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Fullan, Michael and Michael Barber (2010). *Final Report of the Building Blocks for Education Summit*. Toronto: Government of Ontario.
- Gane, Nicholas (2014). "The Emergence of Neoliberalism: Thinking Through and Beyond Michel Foucault's Lectures on Biopolitics," *Theory, Culture & Society*. 31(4): 3-27.
- de la Garza Toledo, Enrique (2012). "La polémica acerca de la tasa de afiliación sindical revisada al 2010," 453-472 in *La situación del trabajo en México, 2012*. Ed. Enrique de la Garza Toledo. Mexico City: Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana.
- Gee, Marcus (2013). "Dysfunctional TDSB cries out for reform and renewal," *The Globe and Mail*. January 12. www.theglobeandmail.com [Accessed January 16, 2013].
- Gidney, R.D. (1999). *From Hope to Harris: The Reshaping of Ontario's Schools*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Ginsburg, Mark (1991a). "Educational Reform: Social Struggle, The State and the World Economic System," 3-48 in *Understanding Educational Reform in Global Context: Economy, Ideology, and the State*. Ed. Mark B. Ginsburg. New York: Garland Publishing.
- Ginsburg, Mark (1991b). "Educational Reform, The State, and the World Economy: Understanding and Engaging in Ideological and Other Struggles," 369-396 in *Understanding Educational Reform in Global Context: Economy, Ideology, and the State*. Ed. Mark B. Ginsburg. New York: Garland Publishing.
- Glyn, Andrew (2007). *Capitalism Unleashed: Finance Globalization and Welfare*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Goldman, Henry and Freeman Klopott (2015). "Fuel for Feud Between Cuomo and De Blasio," *Bloomberg*. www.bloomberg.com July 16, 2015. [Accessed November 18, 2015].
- Golin, Steve (2002). *The Newark Teacher Strikes: Hopes on the Line*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

- Gonzalez, Juan (2015). "Hedge fund execs' money for charter schools may pay off," *New York Daily News*. March 12, 2015. www.nydailynews.com [Accessed March 12, 2015].
- Hagopian, Jesse (2014). *More than a Score: The New Uprising Against High-Stakes Testing*. Ed. Jesse Hagopian. Chicago: Haymarket Books.
- Hagopian, Jesse (2014). "'It was the right thing to do' Interview with Carol Burris," 269-278 in *More than a Score: The New Uprising Against High-Stakes Testing*. Ed. Jesse Hagopian. Chicago: Haymarket Books.
- Haimson, Leonie and Shino Tanikawa (2015). "Time to Reform Mayoral Control," *Gotham Gazette*. www.gothamgazette.com [Accessed May 28, 2015].
- Hantzopoulos, Maria and Alia R. Tyner-Mullings (2012). *Critical Small Schools: Beyond Privatization in New York City Urban Educational Reform*. Charlotte: Information Age Publishing.
- Haraway, Donna (1991). "Situated knowledges. The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective," Ed. Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. London: Routledge.
- Harris, Elizabeth (2015). "20% of New York State Students Opted Out of Standardized Tests this Year," *New York Times*. August 12. www.nytimes.com [Accessed Aug. 19, 2015].
- Harris, Elizabeth and Ford Fessenden (2015). "'Opt Out' Becomes Anti-Test Rallying Cry in New York State," *New York Times*. May 20. www.nytimes.com [Accessed May 23, 2015].
- Harvey, David (2007). Neoliberalism as creative destruction. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. 610: 22-44.
- Head, Jim & Jack Hutton (2005). *The Union Makes Us Strong: OSSTF, 1964-2004*. Toronto: Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation.
- Hecock, R. Douglas (2014). "Democratization, Education Reform, and the Mexican Teachers' Union," *Latin American Research Review*. 49(1): 62-82.
- Hemphill, Clara (2000). "Public Schools That Work," 45-64 in *City Schools: Lessons from New York*. Ed. Joseph P. Viteritti & Diane Ravitch. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Hemphill, Clara (2009). "Parent Power and Mayoral Control: Parent and Community Involvement in New York City Schools," 187-205 in *When Mayors Take Charge: School Governance in the City*. Ed. Joseph P. Viteritti. Washington: Brookings Institution Press.

- Hemphill, Clara and Kim Nauer (2009). *The New Marketplace: How Small-School Reforms and School Choice Have Reshaped New York City's High Schools*. New York: Center for New York City Affairs, Milano The New School for Management and Urban Policy.
- Henig, Jeffrey (2009). "Mayoral Control: What We Can and Cannot Learn from Other Cities," 19-46 in *When Mayors Take Charge: School Governance in the City*. Ed. Joseph P. Viteritti. Washington: Brookings Institution Press.
- Hennessy, Peter (1975). *Teacher Militancy: A Comparative Study of Ontario, Quebec and New York Teachers*. Ottawa: Canadian Teachers' Federation.
- Hennessy, Rosemary. (2013). *Fires on the Border: The Passionate Politics of Labor Organizing on the Mexican Frontera*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Henríquez, Elio (2016a). "Padres marchan junto a maestros chiapanecos," *La Jornada*. May 23. www.jornada.unam.mx [Accessed May 23, 2016].
- Henríquez, Elio (2016b). "Miles de padres de familia y pobladores marchan en 80 municipios de Chiapas," *La Jornada*. May 28. www.jornada.unam.mx [Accessed May 28, 2016].
- Herbert, S. (2010). "A Taut Rubber Band: Theory and Empirics in Qualitative Geographic Research," 69-81. D. DeLyser et al. (eds.) (2010) *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Geography*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Hernandez, Javier and Susanne Craig (2014). "Cuomo Played Pivotal Role in Charter School Push," *New York Times*. www.nytimes.com April 3, 2014. [Accessed April 3, 2014].
- Hernández, Juan Manuel, Ignacio Llamas & Nora Garro (2012). "El mercado de trabajo de los trabajadores de la educación," 313-344 in *La Situación del trabajo en México, 2012*. Ed. Enrique de la Garza Toledo. Mexico City: Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana.
- Hernandez Navarro, Luis (2013). *No habra recreo: contra-reforma constitucional y disobediencia magisterial*. Mexico City: Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung.
- Hernandez Navarro, Luis (2012). *Cero en Conducta: Crónicas de la resistencia magisterial*. Mexico City.
- Herod, Andrew (1997). From a geography of labor to a labor geography: labor's spatial fix and the geography of capitalism. *Antipode*, 29 (1): 1-31.
- Herod, Andrew (2001). *Labor Geographies: Workers and the Landscapes of Capitalism*. New York: Guilford Press.

- Herod, Andrew (2010). "Labour Geography: Where Have We Been? Where Should We Go?" 15-28 in *Missing Links in Labour Geography*. Eds. Ann Bergene, et al. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing.
- Herszenhorn, David. "In Push for Small Schools, Other Schools Suffer," *New York Times*. January 14, 2005. www.nytimes.com [Accessed July 24, 2015].
- Hess, Frederick & Olivia Meeks (2013). "Rethinking district governance," 107-129 in *Education governance for the twenty-first century: overcoming the structural barriers to school reform*. Eds. Paul Manna & Patrick McGuinn. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Huff, Alice (2013). "Reforming the city: neoliberal school reform and democratic contestation in New Orleans," *The Canadian Geographer*. 57 (3): 311-317.
- Humphreys, Edward (1970). "Interaction and Prestige of Secondary School Teachers in the Province of Ontario." *Sociology of Education* 43.4: 404-18.
- Hursh, David (2007). "Assessing No Child Left Behind and the Rise of Neoliberal Education Policies," *American Educational Research Journal*. 44 (3): 493-518.
- Hursh, David (2013). "Raising the Stakes: High-Stakes Testing and the Attack on Public Education in New York," *Journal of Education Policy*. 28 (5): 574-588.
- IEESA (2015). "Devalorización de la labor docente," *Instituto de Estudios Educativos y Sindicales de América*. www.ieesa.org [Accessed October 10, 2015].
- INEE (2015). *Los docentes en México: Informe 2015*. México: INEE.
- Jensen, Kari & Amy Glasmeier (2010). "Policy, Research design and the Socially Situated Researcher," 82-93 in D. DeLyser et al. (eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Geography*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Jessop, Bob (2002). *The Future of the Capitalist State*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Jiménez, Isabel Mayoral (2012). "La OCDE 'lee la cartilla' a Peña Nieto," *CNN Expansión*. www.expansion.mx [Accessed July 17, 2016].
- Jones, Allison (2016). "Teachers' near-'perpetual state of bargaining' costing Ontario millions," *Toronto Star*. September 4. www.thestar.com [Accessed September 4, 2016].

- Jornada, La (2015). "Reconocen organizaciones internacionales al SNTE," *La Jornada*. May 11. www.jornada.unam.mx [Accessed October 11, 2016].
- Kay, Tamara (2011). *NAFTA and the Politics of Labor Transnationalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kearns, Robin (2004). "Being There: Research through Observing and Participating," 103-121 in *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*. Ed. Iain Hay. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kerchner, Charles & Julia Koppich et al. *United Mind Workers: Unions and Teaching in the Knowledge Society*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997.
- Kerr, Lindsay (2006). *Between caring and counting: teachers take on education reform*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Kirst, Michael (2009). "Mayoral Control of Schools: Politics, Trade-offs, and Outcomes," 46-64 in *When Mayors Take Charge: School Governance in the City*. Ed. Joseph P. Viteritti. Washington: Brookings Institution Press.
- Klees, Steven (2008). "A quarter century of neoliberal thinking in education: misleading analyses and failed policies," *Globalisation, Societies and Education*. 6 (4): 311-348.
- Klein, Naomi (2007). *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. New York: Picador.
- Kozol, Jonathan (2009). *On Being a Teacher*. Oxford: One World Press.
- Kretchmar, Kerry (2014). "Democracy (In)Action: A Critical Policy Analysis of New York City Public School Closings by Teachers, Students, Administrators, and Community Members," *Education and Urban Society*. 46 (1): 3-29.
- Kuehn, Larry (2006). *Intercambio- Social Justice Union Internationalism in the BC Teachers' Federation*. PhD Dissertation. University of British Columbia.
- Kuehn, Larry (2008). "The Education World is Not Flat: Neoliberalism's Global Project and Teachers Unions' Transnational Resistance," 53-74 in *The Global Assault on Teaching, Teachers, and their Unions*. Eds. Mary Compton & Lois Weiner. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kuhn, John (2014). *Fear and Learning in America: Bad Data, Good Teachers, and the Attack on Public Education*. New York: Teachers College Press.

- Kunin, Jason (2016). "Optional attendance is killing neighbourhood schools," *Toronto Star*. December 9. www.thestar.com [Accessed December 12, 2016].
- Kurek, Dominik (2016). "Racial segregation blamed for possible closure of Vaughan Road Academy," *York Guardian*. October 19. www.insidetoronto.com [Accessed October 19, 2016].
- Larnar, Wendy and Nina Laurie (2010). "Travelling technocrats, embodied knowledges: globalizing privatisation in telecoms and water," *Geoforum*. 41: 218-226.
- Leithwood, Kenneth, Michael Fullan & Nancy Watson (2003). *The Schools We Need: Recent Education Policy in Ontario & Recommendations for Moving Forward*. Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.
- Lessard, Claude & André Brassard (2009). "Education Governance in Canada, 1990-2003: Trends and Significance," 255-274 in *Canadian Perspectives on the Sociology of Education*. Ed. Cynthia Levine-Rasky. Toronto: Oxford University Press.
- Levine, Murray & Adeline Levine (2014). "Follow the Money: There's No Business Like the Ed. Business...", *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*. 84 (4): 377-386.
- Levinson, Bradley (2001). *We are all equal: Student culture and identity at a Mexican secondary school*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Leyva Piña, Marco Antonio & Javier Rodriguez Lagunas (2012). "La construcción conflictiva del SNTE," 529-567 in *La Situación del trabajo en México, 2012*. Ed. Enrique de la Garza Toledo. Mexico City: Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana.
- Lipman, Pauline (2011). *The New Political Economy of Urban Education: Neoliberalism, Race, and the Right to the City*. New York: Routledge.
- Lipset, Seymour Martin & Noah Meltz (2004). *The Paradox of American Unionism: Why Americans like unions more than Canadians do but join much less*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Lorinc, John (2014). "Toronto, Queen's Park, and the circus at the school board," *Spacing Magazine*. November 24. www.spacing.ca [Accessed November 24, 2014].
- MacLellan, Duncan (2009). "Neoliberalism and Ontario Teachers' Unions: A 'Not-So' Common Sense Revolution," *Socialist Studies*. 51-74.

- Marquez Ayala, David (2008). "Análisis económico de la descentralización educativa en México. La situación del Distrito Federal," 153-216 in *Descentralización y reforma educativa en la ciudad de México*. Secretaría de Educación del Distrito Federal: Mexico City.
- Marston SA, Jones JP III, and Woodward K (2005). "Human geography without scale," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 30: 416–432.
- Martin, Christopher (1994). *Schooling in Mexico: staying in or dropping out*. Aldershot, UK: Avery.
- Mason, Paul (2016). "Mark Carney's last chance saloon warning on the global economy," *Channel 4 News*. www.channel4.com Accessed Feb. 26, 2016.
- McAlevey, Jane (2016). *No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- McCann, Eugene & Kevin Ward (2013). "A multi-disciplinary approach to policy transfer research: geographies, assemblages, mobilities and mutations," *Policy Studies*. 34(1): 2-18.
- McCann, James (2016). *2015 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report*. University of Pennsylvania: www.repository.upenn.edu/think_tanks/10 [Accessed Sep. 14, 2016].
- McDowell, Linda (2010). "Interviewing: Fear and Liking in the Field," 156-171 in D. DeLyser et al. (eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Geography*. London: SAGE Publications.
- McGuinn, Patrick & Paul Manna (2013). "Education governance in America: who leads when everyone is in charge?" in Eds. Paul Manna & Patrick McGuinn, *Education governance for the twenty-first century: overcoming the structural barriers to school reform*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
- Messina, Graciela (2008). "Análisis comparado sobre experiencias de descentralización y gestión educativa municipal," 15-106 in *Descentralización y reforma educativa en la ciudad de México*. Mexico City: Gobierno del Distrito Federal
- Mills, C Wright (1959). *The Sociological Imagination*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Moe, Terry M. (2011). *Special interest: teachers unions and America's public schools*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.
- Monsivais, Carlos (1987). *Entrada Libre: crónicas de la sociedad que se organiza*. Mexico City: Ediciones Era.

- MORE (2016). "MORE/New Action Wins the UFT HS Executive Board," Email Correspondence. May 28.
- Murphy, Marjorie (1992). *Blackboard Unions: The AFT and the NEA, 1900-1980*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- Navarro, César (2016). "Maestros sustituibles y suplantados: nueva estrategia de la reforma," *La Jornada*. May 22. www.jornada.unam.mx [Accessed May 22, 2016].
- NEPC (2016). "Manhattan Institute Website Grades Schools Based on Mirage of Poorly Linked Computations," *National Education Policy Centre*. March 10. www.nepc.colorado.edu [Accessed March 10, 2016].
- Núñez, Isabel, Gregory Michie, Pamela Konkol (2015). *Worth Striking For: Education Policy is Every Teacher's Concern: Lessons from Chicago*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- NYC DOE (2015). *Advance Guide for Educators*. New York: NYC Department of Education.
- NYC Kids PAC (2015). *Mayor de Blasio's Education Report Card*. New York City: NYC Kids PAC.
- OECD (2013). *Getting It Right: Strategic Agenda for Reforms in Mexico*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- O'Neil, Peter & Tracy Sherlock (2016). "Court ruling to force hiring of hundreds of teachers in B.C." *Vancouver Sun*. November 10. www.vancouversun.com [Accessed November 10, 2016].
- Ontario Ministry of Education (2008). *Energizing Ontario Education*. Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario.
- Ontario Ministry of Education (2010). *Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting in Ontario Schools*. Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario.
- Ontario Government (2012a). *Commission on Reform on Ontario's Public Services*. Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario.
- Ontario Government (2012b). *Government of Ontario Parameters for the 2012 PDT Discussions -February 22, 2012*. Toronto: Government of Ontario.
- OSSTF (2016). "Professionalism = Autonomy," *OSSTF*. www.osstf.on.ca [Accessed Feb. 20, 2016].

- OSSTF (2015). *Understanding Professional Judgement*. Toronto: OSSTF.
- OSSTF (2015b). *Collective Bargaining Bulletin*. April 8. Issue 22. OSSTF: Toronto.
- OSSTF (2015c). *Teacher/Occasional Teacher Central Ratification Results*. September 18. OSSTF: Toronto.
- Padilla, Tanalis (2013). "Espionage and education: reporting on student protest in Mexico's Normales Rurales, 1960-1980," *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research*. 19 (1): 20-29.
- Panitch, Leo and Sam Gindin (2012). *The Making of Global Capitalism: The Political Economy of American Empire*. New York: Verso.
- Parekh, Gillian (2013). *Structured Pathways: An Exploration of Programs of Study, School-wide and in-school Programs, as well as Promotion and Transference across Secondary Schools in the Toronto District School Board*. Toronto: Toronto District School Board.
- Peck, Jamie and Nik Theodore (2015). *Fast Policy: Experimental Statecraft at the Thresholds of Neoliberalism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Peck, Jamie and Nik Theodore (2010). "Recombinant workfare, across the Americas: transnationalizing 'fast' social policy," *Geoforum*. 41: 195-208.
- Peck, Jamie (2010). *Constructions of neoliberal reason*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Peck, Jamie (2011). "Geographies of policy: From transfer-diffusion to mobility-mutation," *Progress in Human Geography*. 35(6): 773-797.
- Peck, Jamie (1996). *Work-place: The Social Regulation of Labor Markets*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Peck, Jamie and Adam Tickell (2002). "Neoliberalizing Space," *Antipode*. 34 (3): 380-404.
- Peterson, Bob (1999). "Survival & Justice: Rethinking Teacher Union Strategy," 11-19 in Ed. Bob Peterson. *Transforming Teacher Unions: Fighting for Better Schools and Social Justice*. Milwaukee: Rethinking Schools.
- Pinto, Laura (2012). *Curriculum Reform in Ontario: 'Common Sense' Policy Processes and Democratic Possibilities*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Pinto, Laura (2015). "Fear and loathing in neoliberalism: school leader responses to policy layers," *Journal of Educational Administration and History*. 47 (2): 140-154.

- Pinto, Laura, John Portelli et al (2012). "Charismatic, Competent, or Transformative? Ontario School Administrators' Perceptions of 'Good Teachers,'" *Journal of Teaching and Learning*. 8(1): 73-90.
- Postman, Neil and Charles Weingartner (1969). *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*. New York: Dell Publishing.
- Poulantzas, Nicos (1978). *State, Power, Socialism*. London: New Left Books.
- Potter, Jackson (2016). "CTU joins Canadian, Mexican teachers in solidarity with colleagues facing severe repression," *Chicago Teachers Union*. May 19. www.ctunet.com [Accessed May 19, 2016].
- Poy Solano, Laura (2014). "Inicia examen para ingresar al Servicio Profesional Docente," *La Jornada*. July 12. www.jornada.unam.mx [Accessed Oct 14, 2014].
- Poy Solano, Laura (2016a). "La reforma educativa, como se aplica, puede no ser la que se requiere, reconoce el INEE," *La Jornada*. July 16. www.jornada.unam.mx [Accessed July 31, 2016].
- Poy Solano, Laura (2016b). "Escuelas normales, en el abandono oficial," *La Jornada*. March 14. www.jornada.unam.mx [Accessed March 14, 2016].
- Poy Solano, Laura (2016c). "Expertos: acuerdos SEP-SNTE no tocan el carácter punitivo de la evaluación," *La Jornada*. July 17. www.jornada.unam.mx [Accessed July 17, 2016].
- Poy Solano, Laura (2017). "Maestros de la CNTE entregan al Senado iniciativa en educación," *La Jornada*. February 10. www.jornada.unam.mx [Accessed February 10, 2017].
- Poy Solano, Laura et al (2014). "Suspenden en Michoacán y Oaxaca aplicación de examen para maestros," *La Jornada*. July 12. www.jornada.unam.mx [Accessed Oct 17, 2014].
- Prince, Russell (2012). Policy transfer, consultants and the geographies of governance. *Progress in Human Geography*. 36 (2): 188-203.
- Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario (2013). *Paths to Prosperity: Preparing Students for the Challenges of the Twenty-first Century*. Toronto: Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario.
- Ravitch, Diane and Joseph Viteritti, Eds. (2000). *City Schools: Lessons from New York*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

- Ravitch, Diane (2010). *The Death and Life of the Great American School System*. New York: Basic Books.
- Ravitch, Diane (2000). *The Great School Wars: A History of the New York City Public Schools*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Ravitch, Diane (2013)a. *Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Ravitch Diane (2013)b. "The de Blasio Mandate for Education," *Huffington Post*. www.huffingtonpost.com [Accessed October 10, 2015].
- Rethinking Schools (2014). "Editorial: The Gathering Resistance to Standardized Tests," *Rethinking Schools*. www.rethinkingschools.org 28(3). [Accessed May 26, 2016].
- Rezai-Rashti, Goli (2009). "The Neo-liberal Assault on Ontario's Secondary Schools," 307-322 in *Canadian Perspectives on the Sociology of Education*. Ed. Cynthia Levine-Rasky. Toronto: Oxford University Press.
- Rich, Motoko. "Teacher Shortages Spur a Nationwide Hiring Scramble (Credentials Optional)," *New York Times*. August 9, 2015 www.nytimes.com [Accessed October 6, 2015].
- Riegel, Sarah (2003). "Teachers' Unions and the Politics of Neoliberal Educational Restructuring: Explaining Teachers' Union Responses in Cincinnati, Ohio and Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario," Doctoral Thesis. Kingston: Queen's University.
- Rincones, Rodolfo (2008). "The Context of Teachers' Democratic Movements in Mexico," 217-220 in Ed. Lois Weiner & Mary Compton (2008). *The Global Assault on Teaching, Teachers, and their Unions*. New York: Palgrave.
- Rivera-McCutchen, Rosa (2012). "Considering Context: Exploring a Small School's Struggle to Maintain Its Educational Vision," 21-40 in *Critical Small Schools: Beyond Privatization in New York City Urban Educational Reform*. New York: Information Age Publishing.
- Robles, Jorge & Luís Angel Gómez (1997). *De la Autonomía al Corporativismo: Memoria Cronológica del Movimiento Obrero en México*. Mexico City: El Atajo Ediciones.
- Robinson, Jennifer (2006). *Ordinary Cities: Between Modernity and Development*. London: Routledge.
- Robertson, Susan (2000). *A Class Act: Changing Teachers' Work, Globalisation and the State*. New York: Falmer Press.

- Robertson, Susan (2008). “‘Remaking the World’: Neoliberalism and the Transformation of Education and Teachers’ Labor,” 11-30 in Eds. Lois Weiner & Mary Compton, *The Global Assault on Teaching, Teachers, and their Unions*. New York: Palgrave.
- Robinson, Stephen (1971). *Do Not Erase: The Story of OSSTF*. Toronto: Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation.
- Rodriguez, Sabrina (2015). “The City’s Opt-Out Movement, by the Numbers,” *Chalkbeat New York*. August 12. www.ny.chalkbeat.org [Accessed Aug. 19, 2015].
- Roman, Richard & Edur Velasco Arregui (2015). *Continental Crucible: Big Business, Workers and Unions in the Transformation of North America*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.
- Rose, Joseph (2002). “The Assault on School Teacher Bargaining in Ontario,” *Industrial Relations*. 57 (1): 100-128.
- Rose, Joseph (2012). “The Evolution of Teacher Bargaining in Ontario,” 199-220 in *Dynamic Negotiations: Teacher Labour Relations in Canadian Elementary and Secondary Education*. Eds. Sara Slinn & Arthur Sweetman. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press.
- Ross, Stephanie (2012). “Business unionism and social unionism in theory and practice,” 75-87 in *Rethinking the Politics of Labour in Canada*. Eds. Stephanie Ross & Larry Savage. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.
- Sandals, Liz (2015). Letter to TDSB Trustees. January 15. Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Education.
- Sassen, Saskia (2012). *Cities in a World Economy*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE/Pine Forge.
- Schucher, Karen & Sara Slinn (2012). “Crosscurrents: Comparative Review of Elementary and Secondary Teacher Collective Bargaining Structures in Canada,” 13-49 in *Dynamic Negotiations: Teacher Labour Relations in Canadian Elementary and Secondary Education*. Eds. Sara Slinn & Arthur Sweetman. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press.
- Sellar, Sam & Bob Lingard (2013). “The OECD and global governance in education,” *Journal of Education Policy*. 28 (5): 710-725.
- Senate of Mexico (2016). *La evaluación del desempeño docente: de lo comprometido a lo realizado*. Mexico City: Instituto Belisario Domínguez, Senate of Mexico.

- SEP (2015). *Secundaria por Dirección, Sostenimiento y Modalidad Inicio de Ciclo 2014-2015*. Mexico City: Secretaria de la Educación Publica.
- Shapiro, Eliza (2015). "Cuomo says de Blasio must earn mayoral control," *Politico New York*. www.capitalnewyork.com [Accessed November 10, 2015]
- Shapiro, Eliza (2015b). "City, state teachers' unions take different tacks on exam scores," *Politico New York*. www.capitalnewyork.com [Accessed August 19, 2015].
- Shiller, Jessica (2007). "Educational Reform in the Global City: The Case of the Quality Schools for the Poor Initiative in New York City," *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education*. 1 (2): 127-134.
- Shiller, Jessica (2009). "'These are Our Children!' An Examination of Relationship-Building Practices in Urban High Schools," *Urban Rev.* 41: 461-485.
- Shiller, Jessica (2010). "It's Only Part of the Story: The Fallacy of Improved Outcomes Data in New York City's Effort to Make its High Schools Small," *Education and Urban Society*. 42 (3): 247-268.
- Shiller, Jessica (2011). "Marketing Small Schools in New York City: A Critique of Neoliberal School Reform," *Educational Studies*. 47: 160-173.
- Shiller, Jessica (2012). "City Prep: A Culture of Care in an Era of Data-Driven Reform," 3-20 in *Critical Small Schools: Beyond Privatization in New York City Urban Educational Reform*. New York: Information Age Publishing.
- Shilton, Elizabeth (2012). "Collective Bargaining for Teachers in Ontario: Central Power, Local Responsibility," 221-246 in *Dynamic Negotiations: Teacher Labour Relations in Canadian Elementary and Secondary Education*. Eds. Sara Slinn & Arthur Sweetman. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Shipp, Dorothy (2009). "Updating Tradition: The Institutional Underpinnings of Modern Mayoral Control in Chicago's Public Schools," 117-147 in *When Mayors Take Charge: School Governance in the City*. Ed. Joseph P. Viteritti. Washington: Brookings Institution Press.
- Luh Sin, Harng (2015). "'You're Not Doing Work, You're on Facebook!': Ethics of Encountering the Field through Social Media." *The Professional Geographer* 67.4: 676-85.
- Singer, Alan (2014). "Big Profits in Not-for-Profit Charter Schools," *Huffington Post*. www.huffingtonpost.com [Accessed Nov. 20, 2015].

- Smith, Rex (2015). "Next, Blame Teachers for Draft Picks," *Albany Times Union*. February 14. www.timesunion.com [Accessed Dec. 1, 2015].
- SNTE (2014a). "SNTE refuerza colaboración con la American Federation of Teachers, en beneficio de sus agremiados," *Sindicato Nacional de los Trabajadores de la Educación*. July 9. www.snte.org.mx [Accessed May 2, 2015].
- SNTE (2014b). "El SNTE y la American Federation of Teachers amplían colaboración en beneficio de sus afiliados," *Sindicato Nacional de los Trabajadores de la Educación*. July 14. www.snte.org.mx [Accessed May 2, 2015].
- SNTE (2014c). "Internacional de la Educación reconoce liderazgo del SNTE," *Sindicato Nacional de los Trabajadores de la Educación*. July 17. www.snte.org.mx [Accessed May 2, 2015].
- SNTE (2014d). "El SNTE asiste a reunión anual de la American Federation of Teachers (AFT)," *Sindicato Nacional de los Trabajadores de la Educación*. November 10. www.snte.org.mx [Accessed May 2, 2015].
- SNTE (2015a). "Maestros mexicanos comparten experiencias con docentes estadounidenses," *Sindicato Nacional de los Trabajadores de la Educación*. April 22. www.snte.org.mx [Accessed April 27, 2015].
- SNTE (2015b). "La UNESCO reconoce al SNTE, por su compromiso con la educación," *Sindicato Nacional de los Trabajadores de la Educación*. December 2. www.snte.org.mx [Accessed January 10, 2016].
- SNTE (2016). "Posicionamiento del SNTE ante los hechos ocurridos en Nochixtlán y Hacienda Blanca, Oaxaca," *Sindicato Nacional de los Trabajadores de la Educación*. June 22. www.snte.org.mx [Accessed August 8, 2016].
- SNTE (2016b). "Reconoce la UNESCO al SNTE por su Trabajo a Favor del Magisterio," *Sindicato Nacional de los Trabajadores de la Educación*. April 8. www.snte.org.mx [Accessed August 8, 2016].
- SNTE (2016c). "Reconoce la OCDE al SNTE por el apoyo brindado a los maestros en su proceso de evaluación," *Sindicato Nacional de los Trabajadores de la Educación*. January 4. www.snte.org.mx [Accessed January 10, 2016].
- SNTE (2016d). "El SNTE y la OCDE coordinan acciones por una mejor educación," *Sindicato Nacional de los Trabajadores de la Educación*. October 11. www.snte.org.mx [Accessed October 11, 2016].

- Solano, Laura Poy (2016). "Escuelas normales, en el abandono oficial," *La Jornada*. March 14. www.jornada.unam.mx [Accessed March 14, 2016.]
- Spagnuolo, Mario & Larry Glassford (2008). "Feminism in Transition: The Margaret Tomen Membership Case and the Formation of the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario," *Historical Studies in Education*. 2008: 55-72.
- Spencer, Brenda (2012). "Counting In, Counting Out, and Accounting For" 131-144 in *Canadian Education: Governing Practices & Producing Subjects*. Eds. Brenda Spencer et al. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers
- Springer, Simon (2014). "Human geography without hierarchy," *Progress in Human Geography*. 38(3): 402-419.
- Springer, Simon (2010). "Neoliberalism and Geography: Expansions, Variegations, Formations," *Geography Compass*. 4(8): 1025-1038.
- Springer, Simon (2012). "Neoliberalism as discourse: Between Foucauldian political economy and Marxian poststructuralism," *Critical Discourse Studies*. 9(2): 133-147.
- Statistics Canada (2016). "Unionization rates falling," *Canadian Megatrends*. www.statcan.gc.ca [Accessed Sep. 23, 2016].
- Strauss, Valerie (2015). "Teacher Evaluation: Going from Bad to Worse?" *Washington Post*. January 1. www.washingtonpost.com [Accessed Jan. 1, 2015].
- Sweeney, Brendan, Susan McWilliams & Robert Hickey (2012). "The Centralization of Collective Bargaining in Ontario's Public Education Sector and the need to Balance Stakeholder Interests," 247-263 in *Dynamic Negotiations: Teacher Labour Relations in Canadian Elementary and Secondary Education*. Eds. Sara Slinn & Arthur Sweetman. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Sweeney, Brendan (2013). "The labour geographies of education: the centralization of governance and collective bargaining in Ontario, Canada," *Geoforum*. 44: 120-128.
- Sweetman, Arthur & Sara Slinn (2012). *Dynamic Negotiations: Teacher Labour Relations in Canadian Elementary and Secondary Education*. Kingston, Ont.: School of Policy Studies, Queen's University.
- Sweetman, Mick (2012). "Why Ontario's high school student walkouts give me hope," *Rabble*. September 26. www.rabble.ca [Accessed November 30, 2016].

- Taylor, Clarence (2011). *Reds At the Blackboard: Communism, Civil Rights, and the New York City Teachers Union*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- TDSB (2004). *Policy P.013 SCH: Optional Attendance*. Toronto: Toronto District School Board.
- TDSB (2016). *Toronto District School Board Financial Facts: Revenue & Expenditure Trends*. Toronto: Toronto District School Board.
- Tilly, Charles & Sidney G (Tarrow 2007). *Contentious Politics*. Boulder, Colo.: Paradigm Publishers.
- Tisch, Merryl and Elizabeth Berlin (2014). *Correspondence with Jim Malatras, Director of State Operations*. Albany: New York State Education Department.
- Toronto Star (2013). "Toronto teachers' union plays cynical game: editorial," *Toronto Star*. February 4. www.thestar.com [Accessed November 30, 2016].
- Torres, Carlos (1991). "State Corporatism, Educational Policies, and Students' and Teachers' Movements in Mexico," 115-150 in *Understanding Educational Reform in Global Context: Economy, Ideology, and the State*. Ed. Mark B. Ginsburg. New York: Garland Publishing.
- Traver, Amy (2006). "Institutions and Organizational Change: Reforming New York City's Public School System," *Journal of Education Policy*. 21 (5): 497-514.
- Tufts, Steven (2007). World cities and union renewal. *Geography Compass* 1 (3) 673-694.
- Tufts, Steven and Lydia Savage (2009). Labouring geography: negotiating scales, strategies and future directions," *Geoforum*. 40 (6) 945-948.
- Turati, Marcela (2014). "Ayotzinapa: Las huellas de los militares," *Proceso*. December 23. www.proceso.com.mx [Accessed September 26, 2016].
- UFT (2014). "Frequently Asked Questions," *United Federation of Teachers*. www.uft.org [Accessed Dec. 1, 2015].
- Universal, El (2015). "Organiza SNTE Coloquio Internacional por la Educación Pública," *El Universal*. February 9. www.eluniversal.com.mx [Accessed October 11, 2016].
- Valadez Rodríguez, Alfredo (2016). "De madrugada, el SNTE aplica charrazo en sección 34 de Zacatecas," *La Jornada*. July 16. www.jornada.unam.mx [Accessed August 1, 2016].
- Vandenberghe, Frederic (2014). *What's Critical About Critical Realism?* London: Routledge.

- Vaughan, Mary Kay (1982). *The State, Education, and Social Class in Mexico, 1880-1928*. Decal, Il: Northern Illinois University Press.
- Vergari, Sandra (2013). "Education Governance in Canada and the United States," 231-251 in *Education Governance for the Twenty-First Century: overcoming the structural barriers to school reform*. Eds. Paul Manna & Patrick McGuinn. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
- Verger, Antoni (2009). "The Merchants of Education: Global Politics and the Uneven Education Liberalization Process within the WTO," *Comparative Education Review*. 53(3): 379-401.
- Verger, Antoni, Hula Altinyelken & Mireille de Konig (2013). *Global Managerial Education Reforms and Teachers: Emerging Policies, Controversies and Issues in Developing Contexts*. Amsterdam: Education International.
- Vibert, Ann (2009). "Painting the Mountain Green: Discourse of Accountability and Critical Practice," 293-306 in *Canadian Perspectives on the Sociology of Education*. Ed. Cynthia Levine-Rasky. Toronto: Oxford University Press.
- Viteritti, Joseph (2009). "Why Governance Matters," 1-18 in *When Mayors Take Charge: School Governance in the City*. Ed. Joseph P. Viteritti. Washington: Brookings Institution Press.
- Wallner, Jennifer (2014). *Learning to School: Federalism and Public Schooling in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Weiner, Lois (2012). *The Future of Our Schools: Teachers Unions and Social Justice*. Chicago: Haymarket Books.
- Weiner, Lois & Mary Compton (2008). *The Global Assault on Teaching, Teachers, and their Unions*. New York: Palgrave.
- Willen, Liz (2014). "New NYC Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña Wants Joyful Departure from Bloomberg Era," *Washington Monthly*. www.washingtonmonthly.com . [Accessed November 18, 2015].
- Wills, Jane (2002). "Uneven Geographies of Capital and Labour: The Lessons of European Works Councils." *Antipode*. 33 (3): 484-509.
- Wilson, Margaret (2015). *Review of the Toronto District School Board*. Toronto: Government of Ontario.

- Winton, Sue & Katina Pollock (2016). "Meanings of success and successful leadership in Ontario, Canada, in neo-liberal times," *Journal of Educational Administration and History*. 48(1): 19-34.
- Wong, Kenneth (2009). "Does Mayoral Control Improve Performance in Urban Districts," 64-90 in *When Mayors Take Charge: School Governance in the City*. Ed. Joseph P. Viteritti. Washington: Brookings Institution Press.
- World Bank (2016). "Mexico," *World Bank*. www.worldbank.org [Accessed October 7, 2016].

Appendix A: List of Interviews and Dates

New York

New York Teacher 1	December 2014
New York Teacher 2	December 2014
New York Teacher 3	December 2014
New York Teacher 4	December 2014
New York Teacher 5	December 2014
New York Teacher 6	December 2014
Lois Weiner, Professor of Education	December 2014
New York Teacher 7	January 2015
Former United Federation of Teachers Official 1	January 2015
New York Teacher 8	April 2015
New York Teacher 9	April 2015
New York Teacher 10	April 2015
New York Teacher 11	April 2015
New York Teacher 12	April 2015
New York Teacher 13	April 2015
Former United Federation of Teachers Official 2	April 2015

Mexico City

Mexico City Teacher 1	February 2015
Mexico City Teacher 2	February 2015
Mexico City Teacher 3	February 2015
Mexico City Teacher 4	February 2015
Mexico City Teacher 5	February 2015
Mexico City Teacher 6	February 2015
CNTE Section 10 Activist	February 2015
Enrique de la Garza Toledo, Professor of Sociology	February 2015
Graciela Bensusan, Professor of Politics	February 2015
Hugo Aboites, Professor of Education	February 2015
Mexico City SEP Education Official (AFSEDF) 1	February 2015
Mexico City Teacher 7	May 2015
Mexico City Teacher 8	May 2015
Mexico City SEP Education Official (AFSEDF) 2	May 2015
Mexico City Teacher 9	June 2015
Mexico City Support Staff 1	June 2015
Mexico City Support Staff 2	June 2015

Enrique Enriquez Ibarra, CNTE Section 9 General Secretary	June 2015
Maria de la Luz Arriaga, Professor of Economics	June 2015
Secretary of Public Education Official (SEP) 1	June 2015
Secretary of Public Education Official (SEP) 2	June 2015
Secretary of Public Education Official (SEP) 3	June 2015

Toronto

Toronto Teacher 1	August 2014
Toronto Teacher 2	August 2014
Toronto Teacher 3	August 2014
Toronto Teacher 4	November 2014
Toronto Teacher 5	March 2015
Toronto Teacher 6	March 2015
Toronto Teacher 7	April 2015
Toronto Teacher 8	July 2015
Toronto Teacher 9	July 2015
Toronto Teacher 10	July 2015
Annie Kidder, Executive Director of People for Education	November 2015
Sue Winton, Professor of Education	December 2015
Leslie Wolfe, OSSTF Toronto Vice President	September 2016
Paul Elliot, OSSTF President	September 2016

Appendix B: Teacher Interview Protocol

1. Titles and school responsibilities, subject areas. How many years in this position? Union involvement?
2. Over the course of your career, which policies from the education authorities (education ministry, school district, etc) have had the most impact on your work in the classroom?
3. Which is more important in setting education policy as far as it impacts the classroom, the central education ministry or the local school district? Has this changed over your career?
4. How much scope do teachers have currently to exercise professional judgement or professional autonomy (Eg. the interpretation of curriculum in your lesson plan, selection of teaching strategies and materials) within their classroom teaching? Has this changed over your career?
5. What is the role of principals (or school administrators) in how teachers exercise professional autonomy? Has this changed over your career?
6. To what extent does standardized student evaluations (Eg. EQAO tests) affect your daily teaching?
7. To what extent does the administration and preparation for student standardized exams vary from school to school? What causes these variations, if any?
8. What relationship, if any, exists between the exercise of professional autonomy and obtaining permanent employment status as a teacher?
9. What is the role of parents, if any, with teachers' professional autonomy?
10. To what extent are teachers in your school aware of, or active in the union? How would you describe the presence of the union in your school?